Can. Pam. C Cordner, John

IS PROTESTANTISM A FAILURE?

THE QUESTION

CONSIDERED IN FIVE LECTURES.

ALSO

A DISCOURSE

ON

CHRISTIAN MONOTHEISM.

BY

JOHN CORDNER,

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, MONTREAL.

Montreal:

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NOTE.

The following Lectures were suggested by the widely published Sermons of the Rev. Dr. Ewer of New York, on the "Failure of Protestantism." The term Roman Catholic, formerly used in controversy concerning Protestantism, seems no longer quite fit for the purpose. It is not sufficiently inclusive, seeing the turn modern discussion has taken. Hence I have used the term Sacerdotal, as denoting all Church organisations relying on a priestly order and a supernatural system of sacraments. As to Dr. Ewer's assumption, made throughout his sermons, that a section, or what he has styled "a school," of the Anglican Church is the only pure representative on earth of true Catholic Christianity, I have passed it over, as not likely to be regarded by the public as requiring any serious notice.

The first Lecture was given on the first Sunday in February 1869, and the others in regular order on the following Sunday evenings.

The Discourse on Christian Monotheism was spoken in December 1866, and subsequently published in the New York *Liberal Christian*, from which it is now reprinted.

J. C.

Montreal, March 1869.

LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

"Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"—*Luke* xii. 57.

"Prove all things, hold fast that which is good."—1 *Thess.* v. 21.

JESUS has respect for the faculty of reason in man, and calls on him to use it in matters of the loftiest import, even in judging of his own claims and mission. The apostle Paul, following his master, enjoins the Christians to prove all things, and to hold fast the good and the true, as it is approved by their judgment and conscience. Protestantism had its birth through an impulse of obedience to this injunction. Its strength has come from fidelity thereto. And where it has been weak, its weakness has come through lack of this fidelity. Has it halted on its march or become embarrassed in its progress? Has the promise of the

reformation of the sixteenth century,—that wonderful movement of the human mind against ecclesiastical pretensions and doctrinal corruptions,—has this promise been blasted in the nineteenth century? Has Protestantism failed?

Is Protestantism to be taken as a failure? This question is suggested by the fact that it has been declared a failure from the pulpit of a Protestant Episcopal Church in New York. A series of sermons has lately been preached there by a clergyman of that Church, Dr. Ewer, the object of which was to show that Protestantism as a religious system had failed; and that if Christianity is to be preserved for the benefit of mankind, it must be through a sacerdotal system, that is, through an ecclesiastical corporation of priestly men, charged with dispensing ordinances of supernatural grace to the ordinary run of mankind. All things considered, this is to be regarded as a noteworthy sign of the times. These sermons have been widely published in newspaper and in book, and have provoked comment from the pulpit and the press. It is a bold utterance to come from a Protestant pulpit, and must be taken as an emphatic indication of the present transition state in theology. Yet it ought not take us altogether by surprise. The Oxford movement which began to stir the Anglican Church about a generation since was a sufficient sign to thoughtful minds that the period was approaching when the compromise, as between sacerdotalism and the rights of the individual reason, must come to an end. Protestantism had its

birth through the assertion of these rights, yet some Protestant communities never had sufficient courage or clearness of vision to abjure sacerdotalism and the supernatural claims of a priestly caste.

Eighteen years ago the late Archbishop Hughes of New York, gave a discourse on the same general subject in the Roman Catholic Cathedral of that city. The arguments of the Archbishop and of Dr. Ewer, are substantially alike. In the main points the Roman Churchman and the Anglican Churchman agree in giving their verdict against Protestantism. There was a time when this would have seemed an impossibility. But that time has passed, and with its passing away, the time has surely come when the drowsiness of Protestant theologians will be disturbed, and their wits quickened to a searching examination of the grounds of their Protestantism. They ought to know their system in its strength and in its weakness, and give a helpful direction to the minds that come under their influence. But let them stand well on their guard—on their guard against themselves, in the first place, so that prejudices may not blind them, nor passion mislead them. For let them be well assured that they stand in presence of a formidable adversary, where clear vision and careful method are imperatively demanded. Mere declamation will be of no lasting service to their cause. The interests at stake are immense. In presence thereof all tampering with truth and moral cowardice, ought to be put to shame. Honesty, sincerity, consistency, courage, these only

are worthy to carry the banner of the living God. And these will bear us on to victory.

Is Protestantism a failure? Yes, says Dr. Ewer, an Anglican Churchman, speaking from a Protestant Episcopal pulpit in New York. And this answer is like the echo of what a Roman Catholic prelate had uttered in the same city just eighteen years before. The main drift of the argument in justification of this answer may be briefly stated. Protestantism has not been able to retain the hold it once had on the masses who came under its influence. Its power has passed away so far as they are concerned, and this must be taken as proof of its failure. Then, again, so far as thought works in a religious direction, according to Protestant principles and methods, it must lead to Unitarianism, and this, again, into bald Rationalism and the negation of Christianity. Such would be the logical anticipation, and the actual result has justified the anticipation. Look at Germany, says Archbishop Hughes, the doctrines regarding the Trinity are no longer known or held there. And this is repeated by Dr. Ewer. Look at Geneva, continues the Archbishop, the city where Calvin once held full sway; if a man in that city now professes to believe in the Trinity he will be laughed at. And Dr. Ewer places figures on his page thus: Inhabitants of Geneva about 64,000; of these about 40,000 are Unitarians, about 18,000 Roman Catholics, and the miserable balance only are left to Protestant Trinitarianism. Then, again, look at New England, perhaps the most enlightened portion of America, urges

the Archbishop, what is it now? The very pulpits built for the doctrines of the Trinity are now turned into places for preaching against them. And to this statement Dr. Ewer's voice is heard in confirmation direct and emphatic, thus: Whole orthodox Congregational societies have gone down as bodies into Unitarianism. Where societies have thus gone as bodies, it shows that there was some logical necessity about it. He might have added—a whole Episcopal congregation, also. But the addition of this fact would have embarrassed his argument.

The statements thus made by these able controversialists are statements of fact, and their bearing and significance are too important to be longer overlooked. The argument of Dr. Ewer goes more into detail than that of Archbishop Hughes, and deals more directly with the state of the case as it is to-day. One thing is to be noted, and kept always in mind, namely, that it is the so-called orthodox Protestantism which is referred to in the argument when doctrine comes under review. Unitarianism, he says, is to grow into a large body through the dying out of Trinitarian Protestantism. His position is, that the Rationalists have a ground to stand on; the true Catholics have a ground to stand on; but Protestantism has no ground to stand on; and since Unitarianism is the logical result of the Protestant principle, Protestantism as a religious system must disappear through Unitarianism into Rationalism and negation of Christianity. His position is clear and intelligible, and his affirmation that Unita

rianism is the logical result of the Protestant principle seems to me incontrovertible. As to this leading, by special necessity, to bald Rationalism or negation, here I must take issue, and shall show cause before I leave off the discussion. The cure proposed for all the ills of Christendom, is a complete return to sacerdotalism, and the recognition of a visible priestly order to mediate between man and God. Now with all respect to our bold controversialist, I think this is about the last thing that the growing intelligence of Christendom is likely to accept. If the evil cannot be cured in some other way, then I do not hesitate to say it cannot be cured at all.

If I should urge that his line of pleading leads him inevitably to Rome, as I think it does, I should not say so by way of reproach, for I hold that we should all go to Rome, if it can be truly shown that Rome is the right place for us all to go to. We are in no position to see the truth in any controversy, or follow its leading until we set aside prejudice. He says it is possible for him to enter ecclesiastical league with Rome and with the Greek Church, without being overcome by Rome. To this I can only say, let him try it and he will find out his delusion. He may aver that my line leads inevitably to rationalistic negation. My answer is that it will certainly lead to denial of all that is irrational in religion. But as to negation of Christianity, this cannot be, for I regard Christianity as a rational religion. It is the perfection of reason.

Is Protestantism a failure? If I answer *yes* to this

question, I should have to qualify it with *no*. And if I answer *no*, I should have to qualify it with *yes*. And if a like question were asked concerning Christianity itself, I should be compelled to answer in a similar way. That Protestantism has been a failure to a certain extent is undeniable, but that sacerdotalism has been a failure to a far greater extent is equally undeniable. Considering the claim which sacerdotalism makes, as the divinely commissioned caretaker of Christendom, the very existence of Protestantism must be taken so far as proof of its failure. All the so-called spiritual havoc which Protestantism has made must be taken as evidence of the inadequacy of sacerdotalism to protect the interests of Christianity. What called Protestantism into being? The unbelief, indifferentism, undisguised selfishness, and open immorality which had become identified with sacerdotalism and the ecclesiastical corporation called the Church. In the technical language of ecclesiasticism, these things go by the general term "scandal," and are thought not to be of cardinal consequence one way or other, as affecting the fundamental question. There is a nice theory which satisfies such casuists as wish to be thus satisfied, by drawing a distinction between the man and the priest, so that even a bad man may retain all priestly virtue. But common sense refuses to recognise any such distinction. If the assumed supernatural virtue be not sufficient to preserve the individual man, in whom it is said to inhere, from the common vices of mankind, and keep him in a Christ-like mind

and way, then we must pronounce the whole thing a delusion and a snare.

In an argument like Dr. Ewer's, which is, on the whole, a plea for ecclesiasticism, we have the usual allusions to early history, and the usual amount of gratuitous assumption connected therewith. He evidently felt and understood that his audience was of a mixed and popular, rather than of a critical kind. His assertions concerning the organised Christianity or visible Church of the first century, have no proper historical support. That it should be just as he affirms, "identical in its ministry, form of government, sacraments, faith and liturgical mode of worship," is of fundamental consequence to his argument. But this cannot possibly be established with anything like the certainty which his case demands. It might easily be disputed by appeal to primitive records, which show differences between the apostles themselves, and among the Churches which they established. The sacerdotal system—the theory of an ecclesiastical corporation carrying an inherent supernatural grace and power, requires a demonstration of such identity in primitive times, and it requires also a demonstrated line of succession from the primitive corporation, without break or hindrance, and bearing its clear marks of supernatural grace all the way from the beginning even until now. No such demonstration can be given, and it is waste of time to attempt it. Nor, from my point of view, is this to be regarded as of material consequence. If I am asked who, then, are now the successors of the apostles? I

answer, men of apostolic spirit, who show themselves willing to spend and be spent in applying the doctrine of Jesus Christ to the condition of our times as the apostles did to the condition of their times. If I am asked where we are to get the doctrines of Christianity if we lose sight of the ecclesiastical corporation or Church? I answer, from Jesus Christ himself. If I am further asked where I am to find Christ, so that I may know the religion he taught? I answer, in the New Testament, in the narratives of his life and teaching, given by the four Evangelists. This is my direct and ready way of dealing with the whole question. If I should find an earnest and elaborate discussion going on about the character of the water of the St. Lawrence as it passes our city—scientific men making analyses of its contents with the view of ascertaining precisely the water which came from the sources of the river before it passed over falls and rapids, carrying traces of earthy formations along with it,—if I should find such a discussion going on, I would say, let us simplify the matter by going to the head waters, and take the water as we find it there. In like manner I say let us simplify this discussion about the Christian religion by going direct to its original teacher; for to this end, indeed, were the Gospel narratives written and providentially preserved, that you and I, and all men who desire to know the truth as it is in Jesus, might have the privilege of hearing it from Jesus' lips, and seeing it in Jesus' life, apart from the

confusion and clouds which theological disputation is apt to raise.

From this you will see that I do not propose to lead you into details of historical controversy, concerning the constitution of the Church of the apostolic age, or the matter of succession thereto. Archbishop Hughes and Dr. Ewer aver that there was an ecclesiastical corporation founded in the apostolic age, charged with a supernatural power of dispensing sacraments as instruments of supernatural grace, and that, moreover, this ecclesiastical corporation is supernaturally perpetuated until this day. Such controversialists assume that the apostolic council at Jerusalem was such a corporation. But it is pure assumption, no adequate proof can be produced. We know there was such a council of apostles, but "their power was moral not magisterial, their influence spiritual not official," as Dean Stanley has rightly said. Moral power and spiritual influence are still the marks of apostolic men. The historical investigations necessarily involved in the controversy of apostolical succession may interest persons having a taste for such studies, but it is an interminable business, without adequate object, or promise of satisfactory result one way or other. The priestly caste is of a different order from the "mere man," as Dr. Ewer styles ordinary mortals, being an anointed vessel of supernatural grace. By virtue of his office, Archbishop Hughes would aver he can transmute a wafer of flour into flesh and blood. Very well, gentlemen, I say, let us see how this is, show us

token of your supernatural power in some plain and available way, as by going to the "Outdoor Relief Committee," and multiplying their supply of loaves, so that they shall meet the wants of the poor—do something like this, as Jesus did, and then we will give your claim to stand to us in Christ's stead, an immediate and profound consideration. But no, they will do no such thing, they will not meet "mere men" on any such reasonable ground, common to mere human apprehension. No, their response in effect comes to this: our supernatural power *is*, and that is *how* it is. Such pretension is an insult to the common sense of mankind and, except in connection with religion, would not be tolerated—no, not for an hour.

Is Protestantism a failure? Having now spoken concerning Dr. Ewer's book, its purport and its method, I shall proceed to answer the question in my own way. I shall not lead you into dark, tangled and doubtful by-ways of discussion, more likely to bewilder the mind than satisfy it; but take you by a way as simple and direct as the nature of the case admits. I propose, first, to take my stand upon the Christianity of Christ himself, as essential Christianity. "Surely," says Dr. Ewer, "Protestantism as a system for the preservation of Christianity, is a consummate failure." Now this leads us to consider what Christianity is. Secondly, I shall refer to sacerdotalism, as an accretion or growth on Christianity in its historic development, as a parasite on a tree. Thirdly, I shall speak of Protestantism as the inevitable result of sacerdotalism,

being a protest of the God-given reason of man against the despotism and pretension of the sacerdotal corporation, or Church. I hold that Protestantism has been a success; and in the present shaking of the traditional dogmatic creeds which it inherited from sacerdotalism, and which it kept so long without applying to them the searching tests of its own principles—in the present shaking of these creeds, I say, I see the promise of still greater success. It is now coming rapidly into consciousness of its proper mission, which is, not to perpetuate ecclesiastical traditions as vital doctrines, but to vindicate the rights of reason in religion. Fourthly, I shall revert to essential Christianity, and show that spiritual freedom and diversity of operation are necessary to its life and its success, as a saving power and elevating influence for mankind. And I shall close by presenting my idea of the true catholic or universal Church of the future.

The farther consideration of this matter must now be deferred until next Sunday evening. The subject is one of commanding importance, and too large to be compassed by a single pulpit discourse. It will require another, and probably more, to carry out my proposed plan of treatment. Let me bespeak your attention, my friends, for the sake of a great and sacred cause—the greatest and most sacred cause, indeed, which can be brought under human review. May God, by his Spirit, guide us, shedding light on the dark places, and leading us, through sincere love of truth, unto himself, the absolute truth and infinite love.

LECTURE II.

CHRISTIANITY AND SACERDOTALISM.

"I am the true vine.—*John* xv. 1.

"When the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also."—*Matt.* xiii. 26.

Is Protestantism a failure? The assertion from a Protestant Episcopal pulpit, that Protestantism is a failure, suggests this question and provokes the discussion on which we have entered. You will remember that on last Sunday evening I announced several topics as suggested by the question, and involved in the line of reply which I proposed to take. The first two points were the Christianity of Jesus Christ, and sacerdotalism as a growth thereupon. To these topics we shall confine ourselves this evening. In view of their high importance and various bearings, let me ask your patient, candid, and devout attention. And may the Spirit of truth guide us into all truth.

About ten years ago, I met a Franciscan friar on board a Mediterranean steamer. He was free in informing me of his own religious position, and ready, also, to enquire about mine. When I told him that I was a Unitarian, he said he had been a missionary at Hong Kong when Sir John Bowring was there, that he had met Sir John, who was a Unitarian and a good man, but then, he added, a Unitarian is not a Christian. I attempted to reason with him, but found him immovable. To everything I said, he simply repeated a Unitarian is not a Christian. With the view of bringing him to reason I fell back on his own method, and simply repeated, a Franciscan is not a Christian. This led him to explanation. Then I enquired if he accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as a competent teacher and guide in religion. He bowed reverently and replied, "most certainly." Then, I rejoined, hath he not said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and mind, and thy neighbor as thyself; on these two commands hang all the law and the prophets." Has he not said: "this do and thou shalt live." My Franciscan friend paused, and swept his eyes round sea and sky, and slowly answered, "yes." Then, said I, if a Unitarian follows this teaching of Jesus, and in his spirit does that to which Christ promises eternal life, is he not a Christian and an heir of eternal life? He answered, that he "dare not deny it." When I heard this, I felt that Jesus Christ was, indeed, a reconciler not only between man and God, but also between man and man. I felt that in the simplicity and sublimity

of his doctrine there was that which would bring harmony, peace, and life eternal to all intelligent existence.

Truly, my Italian friend and I stood at opposite points on the great circle of Christian theology. But as I looked into his calm and earnest face, and heard him speak of his missionary work in foreign lands, I had no doubt of his being a Christian, accepted of our common master. And while in services rendered for Christ's cause, I felt he had the advantage of me, I felt that in my own simpler and more humane theology, I had the advantage of him. For while he was perplexed as to my position, I had no perplexity concerning his. Here, at least, I knew that I was the true Catholic, and not he. He looked at Christianity as presented by the sacerdotal corporation called the Church. I looked at Christianity as presented by its first and great teacher—even Christ himself. To be a Christian, according to his conception, was to believe a given dogmatic system and to bow before a priestly authority. To be a Christian, according to my conception, was to love God and man and be faithful in this twofold service after the manner, and in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

When we look abroad over the world, and back through Christian history, when we hear the din of controversy concerning doctrine and ritual, degenerating as it so often does, into mere trifles and conceits, metaphysics and millinery, when we hear the tones of passion and prejudice in which Christians exclude and

denounce one another, we are ready to exclaim: O, for one week of the personal ministry of Jesus Christ among us, that we might hear with our own ears the word he taught, and see with our own eyes his life divine. How we should follow him from place to place, and gladly receive and cherish his heavenly doctrine! And yet, are we quite certain we should do all this? What if he should not come in the way we expect! What if he should come from some Galilee, out of which we have already decided no prophet could possibly come! All this might be, for human nature, controlled by its prejudices, is very much the same in all ages and all lands. But suppose he should come—come to-morrow to this great city of Canada, as he came nearly nineteen centuries ago, to the great city of Judea, what should we see and hear? A prince of this world robed in regal splendor? No. A priest in sacerdotal vestments bearing mystic symbols, before which human reason was commanded to fall prostrate? Not at all. Prince and priest combined, blessing weapons of war to fight for temporal sovereignty? Ah no, my friends. Peer of some wealthy realm, lifting up his voice for tithes and rates to fill his own pockets? No, no, we say again. The manner of his coming would be in strong contrast to all these. We should see one dressed in the ordinary garb of the common people—one who went in and out among them, sharing their joys and their sorrows through his profound sympathy for humanity—one who mingled even with publicans and sinners, and who stands ready to throw the shield of his divine

benignity over weeping frailty, while hard pharisaic virtue has its stones ready to strike the woman down. He urges no priestly claims, he performs no priestly rites, but he speaks his sweet beatitudes to the gathered multitude on the hill side. And when he closes that sermon on the mount the people say one to another, he speaks with authority, yet of a different kind from that of the scribes, priests or professed teachers of the time. His word was vital with the truth of God, and so struck home to the heart and conscience of his hearers. He propounds no metaphysics, writes no creeds, makes no attempt to put men through a process of intellectual gymnastics, as a condition of fellowship with himself and favor with his father in heaven. No, so far as we know, Jesus never wrote a line. He entrusted his divine word to the keeping of the thin air, and it has reverberated through the world for more than eighteen hundred years, bearing light and hope and comfort and strength and joy and progress wherever it has gone. Love God and man, he says, this is the chief thing, all depends on this. If your heart is set on your possessions, then sell them all, he says, and give to the poor. For thus only will you be able to conquer avarice. Ask him how his true disciples are to be known, and you will hear him reply, by their love one toward another. Listen to his parable of the good Samaritan, and receive here his divine rebuke to all sectarian prejudices and national animosities. Give ear to his parable of the talents, and learn that for every gift given, faculty bestowed, and privilege granted,

God will require honest and faithful use, and hold us all to strict account, according to the measure of talents bestowed. And notice well how he calls on us to use our reason in judging what is right, thus giving special respect to reason and conscience, as distinguishing faculties in man. He tells us when we pray to say "Our Father." And if we want to know the way of reconciliation with God, let us sit at the feet of Jesus and receive with grateful heart his touching parable of the prodigal son. Repent of the sin and come back to the father, casting yourself on his mercy, and you will find the open arms ready to welcome you. This is Christ's method of reconciliation or atonement. If Jesus were to appear in our city, it is thus he would speak and teach still. And thus speaking, how would the orthodox teachers of our day, papal and protestant,—how would they regard him and treat him? I venture no opinion on this point. Certainly his teaching would be found to differ materially from their ecclesiastical and authoritative creeds. But I only state the recorded facts of the case, when I say that the orthodox priests of his own day were his persistent and deadly foes. The constables whom they sent to arrest him on a certain occasion, returned to them, saying, "never man spake like this man." Nevertheless, they ceased not their persecution until they brought him to death. And it is specially worthy of note in these days of renewed sacerdotal claims, that in the narratives of Christ's life on earth, as given in the New Testament, we do not

find the word "priest" at all, except as the name of that class who were his enemies and persecutors.

If I am asked what is Christianity, I go away behind all priests and creeds, and I say that Christ is Christianity. Son of God and Son of man as he was, he came to restore all the sons of men to a conscious filial relation with God, his Father and their Father, his God and their God. So that the apostle John could write: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." As he was the visible image of God to men, so is he the typical man, showing us man the earthly child, redeemed from the power of evil, regenerated with divine life, and lifted through love and obedience into conscious union with the heavenly Father. As we grow into the Christ likeness, so do we grow into consciousness of the divine sonship. Let a man go behind all priests and authoritative creeds, closing eyes and ears alike against their assumptions and their threatenings, and betake himself to the devout study of the Lord's life and teaching, as he finds it in the Gospels,—let him sit at his feet, and with grateful reverence follow him from place to place until the spirit of filial obedience which pervaded Christ's life, penetrates his life, and then will he find the light and joy of regeneration. That is, his life will be ruled by new motives, drawn from the love of God and the desire to do God's will. And as God rises up before his mind as the perfect truth, justice, holiness and love, so will he become more and more true, holy, just and loving in all the duties and relations of life.

Thus Christ stands for Christianity, as light and guidance for man. All that I can say here must be taken in relation to the whole of the great subject, only as a suggestion, indicating the mine of truth and love which awaits and invites the search of the seeking and faithful soul.

Here, then, we see Christianity planted in the world, a living spiritual vine, the fruit whereof is for the healing of the nations. And what glorious fruit we might expect! But,—and here is the point to be well noted, there were other growths in the world.

Far away in the remotest past of history, we see the existence of priesthoods—orders of men acting as mediating agents between man and God. The growth of the priestly caste is a natural growth out of human nature. Mankind, in general, desire a vicarious religion. Whatever may have been their varying conceptions of deity, their recognised duties to their God demanded more of immediate personal service than they were willing to give. Hence their readiness to delegate to others their duties of prayer, sacrifice and service, while they themselves went on their own errands of lust, ambition, or gain. And hence, again, the rise of a class, not necessarily of their own mere design or device, but as a natural growth out of the exigencies of human nature, and this class would, as naturally, be of the more intelligent and discerning sort,—guides and leaders of the people. Their position tempted them to deception, and the love of rule, natural to man, led them to dominate over others. In the matter of religion it

became evident that the people had no strong objection to being deceived, provided this left them more free to follow their own ways. Hence came pretensions peculiar to the priestly order—assumption of superiority, marvels, magic, incantations and so forth. Hence the priesthoods of India, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Hence a supreme pontiff in pagan Rome a thousand years before Christianity became the religion of the empire.

In the Mosaic dispensation of the Hebrews the necessity for a priestly class was recognised, and a tribe was set apart for the service of the temple. This dispensation was provisional in its nature, educational in its purpose, designed to pass away before something higher, wider, grander and more spiritual in the future. Look through Hebrew history and you will observe the tendency of the priests to degrade the worship into a mere formalism. They, too, fell into ignorance and sin. Then, in the divine order, the prophet appeared, proclaiming the word of the Lord fresh and strong, and denouncing both priests and people. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," saith the Lord, through Hosea, "because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me." "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God?" writes Micah, "will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee but

to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?" When it became "like people, like priest," God recalls all to the essential thing, justice, mercy, humility. And Jesus, when he came, recalls the people to the prophet's teaching, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

By the living word of Jesus the good seed was sown. But the seed of tares was in the ground. In Christ himself we see the true vine. But plants of another order struck their roots in the field.

Plant a vine in your garden where ivy and clematis abound. It grows. And they grow too. Stake your vine and they follow it, twisting round stem and branches. In June you see a mass of foliage, but it is a mixed foliage—leaves of ivy, clematis and true vine. In fruit time you look for grapes, but you find the clusters thin and small. Here and there, where sun and air get more freely to the true vine, some larger and fairer fruit is found. But on the whole the fruit is far below what it ought to be. Yet there is a luxurious growth of foliage, and the clustering flowers of the clematis make the growth, as it stands, not only beautiful but gorgeous. Years pass on, and the growth becomes larger and more imposing. Crowds are attracted by it, and many find shelter under its shadow, content to accept such fruit as it may yield. Roots and branches, foliage, flowers and fruit have all become mingled and intertwined. Some who taste of the fruit of the vine may think that it ought to be larger and better. And thus thinking, they may fol-

low the branches of the growth through its entanglement, and seeing its composite character, they may wish to remove the parasites—the ivy and the clematis—so that the vine might grow more freely according to its own proper growth. But those who are content in its shadow resist any such attempt. One root is as good as another to them, and since the roots are all under ground, and out of sight, they assert and insist that there is but one root to the whole growth as it stands, and that the whole must be maintained intact and sacred.

The true vine is Christianity as planted by Jesus Christ. The parasites, ivy and clematis, stand for sacerdotalism and such foreign growths as have struck root along with it, and grown up around it in such imposing proportions. The whole growth, in its composite character, in its mixed foliage, flower and fruit, may be taken to represent the sacerdotal Church of Christendom.

This sacerdotal Church proclaims Protestantism a failure. We shall consider this matter of Protestantism more directly next Sunday evening. Meantime we may take note of sacerdotalism and consider how far it has been a success or a failure.

The controversialists who have provoked this discussion, by proclaiming Protestantism a failure, have quoted newspaper correspondents, in evidence. I admit the legitimacy of this course, but to serve any good purpose, the evidence should be taken in full. When taken partially on behalf of partizan ecclesias-

ticism, such testimony is only calculated to mislead. I shall offer some evidence on the other side, to supply the deficiency. In a recent issue of the New York *Times*, a correspondent writes from Naples: "From these statistics (which he gives) I conclude that in Italy three-fifths of the grown up men and four-fifths of the grown up women are absolutely ignorant of the first rudiments of education. I am confirmed in these conclusions by the revelations made in the census of 1861, when it was found that of the men, sixty out of a hundred could neither read nor write, and of the women, seventy-eight in a hundred were in a similar condition. Further statistical information is contained in the military census, which proves that sixty-four out of a hundred conscripts were totally uneducated." From which it appears that the success of sacerdotalism in Italy, is seen in keeping the great mass of the people in ignorance. But the voice of the Lord God is not hushed to-day, nor is his arm shortened, any more than of old. Now, as of old, his cry is: "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; and because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, and thou shalt be no priest to me." And so, in the onward march of God's providential order, we see the power of the priestly class failing in Italy. I need not speak of the internal condition of that beautiful land, where brigandage makes its highways the terror of the peaceful traveller. Next to Italy, we may take Spain as a land where sacerdotalism has had full sway in civil and religious affairs. Says a correspondent of

the London *Times* in a recent letter: "The real fact is, that, although Spaniards may as a general rule, believe nothing but Catholicism, one must take into account those who believe nothing, and there stop short; that scoff and scepticism and rank infidelity, not grounded on genuine conviction, not arising from mature enquiry, but springing from a mere spirit of contradiction, from disgust, and reaction against the unbearable tyrannical pressure, these have made fearful havoc among those whom a little knowledge has raised above the common herd. All this prodigious unbelief, and the dissoluteness attendant upon it, cannot date from a day, or even from these three months of revolutionary period. It is an evil of long standing. It is the work of the priests themselves, the work of those who availed themselves of the ascendancy which a despotic, irresponsible power gave them to crush and dwarf and degrade that reason which it ought to have been their mission to guide, to enlighten and to conciliate." From this it would appear that sacerdotalism has shown itself a signal failure in these countries where it has had an unrestricted influence.

And such failure tells with tenfold force against sacerdotalism when taken in connection with its pretensions. According to its own theory, constantly proclaimed, it is the divinely commissioned caretaker of Christendom. It is no part of Protestantism to make such claim. Any failure on its part, therefore, tells with less effect against it. But failure on the part of sacerdotalism is absolutely

conclusive against it. For its theory is, that God has appointed the sacerdotal corporation, and invested it with supernatural power to carry out its grand functions. The chief priest, or head of the corporation, is God's vice-gerent on earth. He has the crosier put in his hand by the living God, and thus clothed with plenary authority, he is constituted chief pastor of the flock of Christendom. Such is the sacerdotal theory and claim. Now, the simplest test of this theory is the actual condition of the flock. How has it been cared for? How is it now? Scattered and apart—more than half of it clean away from even the largest and most potent portion of the divided sacerdotal body. And of that which visibly remains, an immense proportion is spiritually ill-fed, quite impoverished, unruly and unprofitable. The case speaks for itself, indeed, in a language which common sense cannot fail to understand. If you place a shepherd on your sheep farm as your agent, to take care of your sheep, giving him assistants and appliances requisite for the purpose—if you find, again, in looking at your flock that the shepherd cannot show you half of them within the bounds of the farm, the others having broken away from his keeping; and, moreover, if you see that those which remain have a large proportion of unruly and unpromising sheep among them, you discard him for incompetency. If he is a man of common sense he feels himself discarded before you tell him so. In his own failure he sees his discharge. And so with sacerdotalism. Even assuming that it

had such a trust, as its own theory alleges and insists on, the actual result proves its unfitness, or its unfaithfulness. And if it could or would come to the light of clear reason and common sense, in its failure to make its own pretensions good, it would recognise and admit its mistaken position.

I have now spoken of the Christianity of Jesus Christ, and of sacerdotalism as a growth thereupon, its pretensions and its failure.

The next topic in order is Protestantism, which I shall consider in its nature and purpose, its failure and success. This, however, must be deferred until next Sunday evening.

Meantime may God bless what has been said to the promotion of his own glory and truth, and the furtherance among men of the kingdom of his Son.

LECTURE III.

PROTESTANTISM.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."—*Isaiah* i. 18.

"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures."—*Acts* xvii. 2.

Is Protestantism a failure? This is the question before us,—pressed upon our attention by strong currents of thought from various directions, but all tending powerfully towards one point; and demanding from all Protestants a serious review of their position. In my line of reply I have already noticed two points: 1st, The Christianity of Jesus Christ; 2nd, Sacerdotalism as a growth thereupon; and now, in the 3rd place, I come to consider Protestantism:—What it is; its purpose; its failure; and its success. This is a large subject, and in a pulpit discourse can be treated only in a brief way. On behalf of God's truth, in the sincere love thereof, rather than of our own preju-

dices, and in perfect charity to all, let me bespeak your candid attention.

Three hundred and forty years ago a diet assembled at Spires, called by Charles the Fifth, then emperor of Germany. Religious disputes stirred the land, and the diet was called to pass upon the matter. It pronounced against farther agitation on religious questions, and condemned the attempt made to reform the Church. Against this decision a formal and solemn PROTEST was made by six princes, and the deputies of thirteen imperial towns, present at the diet. This Protest made them PROTESTANTS.

To reach the meaning of this Protest we must go back to another diet held about eight years before—I mean the diet at Worms. Charles was then the newly elected emperor, and with the view of quieting disturbances which had been raised on Church questions,—disturbances which had culminated the year before in a decisive rupture between the Pope and a large portion of the people,—he convoked a diet at Worms. It came together in due order,—the crowned heads of Germany, lords temporal and spiritual, papal legates, and foreign ambassadors,—the greatest monarch of the age presiding. When the diet met, the legate from Rome demanded the immediate condemnation of a man whom the Pope had already excommunicated. This man was Martin Luther; who, up to a few years before, had been a dutiful son of the Church—a monk, a university professor, and a preacher. Prince Frederick, how-

ever, insisted that this man should have a hearing before the diet. Luther was summoned, and to Worms he went. He was called upon to retract. But he said, "No! If I am not convinced by proof from holy scriptures, or by cogent reasons, I neither can nor will retract, for it is not right for a Christian to speak against his conscience." He was ready to "reason with them out of the scriptures," after the custom of the apostle Paul. But the diet was controlled by the Roman Church, and not by reason and scripture.

During the previous year there had been mutual acts of excommunication, as between Pope Leo and the monk Luther. The monk had been sorely perplexed in his duties as confessor, by the sale of indulgences by Tetzel, a Dominican monk, who had been deputed by Leo to raise money in this way. Luther's penitents positively refused to abandon their sins, saying that they had purchased indulgences. Hence the controversy which led to the rupture between him and Rome. Leo, in the name of the Church, excommunicated Luther as a heretic, to be shunned by all good Christians. Luther, in the name of Christianity, excommunicated Leo as a heretic and apostate, condemned by the holy scriptures. Good angels looked down with sorrow on the folly and passion of these two men in their mutual denunciations. But it was the method of the time. Leo stood for the Church and for priestly authority. Luther stood for the right and for the rights of man. And in the

open court of heaven and earth Luther had the best of it.

Now we see what the Protest meant when presented at Spires. It was meant to sustain Luther against Leo,—the cause of the right and of the rights of man, as against the cause of the Church and of priestly authority. It was, in effect, a Protest against sacerdotal authority and assumption, made in full view of Luther's grand declaration at Worms a few years before. The individual soul declared itself free of priestly fetter, with right to reason at the call of the Lord, as in prophetic times; with right to use its reason in reading and learning from holy scriptures, as in apostolic times; and with right to reject, at all times, any doctrine or practice not capable of "proof from holy scripture, or by cogent reasons." All this was involved in the Protest at Spires. I do not say that all who joined in that Protest saw the full sweep of its significance; nevertheless the significance was there, open to every eye capable of seeing it. And thus, looking at the Protest in its full meaning, we find the primitive and proper meaning of the term Protestantism.

Protestantism, then, may be rightly defined as Christianity acting on its own behalf, and aiming to perform its proper work in the world, in open Protest against the assumption of Sacerdotalism.

It is to be kept in mind that the Reformation of the sixteenth century was a movement of thought, absolutely needed in its time, rather than a conclusion of

any sort. When Luther stood before the diet at Worms, and said: "If I am not convinced by proof from holy scripture, or by cogent reasons, I neither can nor will retract, for it cannot be right for a Christian to speak against his conscience,"—when Luther thus asserted his rights as an individual, he announced the deepest ground of Protestantism, as a Protest against the Papal authority. This assertion of the right of the individual to judge for himself must needs go before any statement of the theology which might be the result of the individual judgment. Luther had to feel his right to judge for himself, and exercise it, before he could reach and accept any result in opposition to the teaching of the Roman Church. The exercise of this right made him a Protestant. The result at which he arrived gave him a specific character as a theologian. Luther, claiming his own rights as an individual, did in effect claim such rights for all. He could not put forth his own theology as infallible, nor could it be a true theology to any other soul, except so far as it proved it for itself. Melancthon, Zwingle, and others might, or might not, accept Luther's theology; yet standing on the ground of holy scripture, and the right of the individual to read and reason, and judge for himself, they were Protestants. There was a diversity of interpretations, of operations, and of administrations, among the first Protestants, as well as among those of all subsequent times. This diversity was a legitimate result of the Protestant principle. It was what might naturally be expected in the develop-

ment of the Christian religion,—a religion which gave respect to the God-given reason in man. Saith Paul to the Corinthians, There are diversities of gifts, of administrations, and of operations. Christianity, asserting and manifesting itself through man in his diversified endowment, presented diversities in thought and form, just as an orchard sown with apple seed produces a growth of trees of various size and form. Nor does the variety stop here, but extends to each separate tree, where the vital sap comes out in leaves, blossoms and fruit of divers size, form and colour. And all this diversity comes in God's own way.

In matters religious, the purpose of sacerdotalism is to stunt such diversity, by cutting all down to one pattern. It would stifle individual reason, and by threat of damnation, overcome the mind through fear, and bring it under its own control. The purpose of Protestantism is to give effect to Christianity in securing mental freedom. Christianity comes to the individual soul to give it confidence towards God as father, friend, and constant helper. And Protestantism comes in to say to priestly authority: "stand aside, and leave the soul free in its service of God." Such is the purpose of Protestantism.

How has this purpose been served? Has Protestantism been a success? Or, has it shown itself a failure? In its actual development we may regard it both as a failure and a success.

To a large extent it has been a failure. And why? Simply because it has been unfaithful to its own

spirit and method. Those who became Protestants forgot their proper origin, and lost sight of their proper mission. They set aside the papal authority, indeed, but they fell back on papal methods. They appealed to holy scripture, reason and conscience as against the authority of the Pope, but refused such appeal when presented as against their own authority. The Protest at Spires, and Luther's declaration at Worms, were alike rationalistic in their origin. Not, however, in the sense of rejecting the supernatural element in religion. For they held by holy scripture as authoritative. To define Protestantism, therefore, in the current phrase of to-day we should say that it is a system of rational supernaturalism, as distinguished from an anti-supernatural rationalism on the one side, and from an irrational supernaturalism on the other. And thus standing, it occupies distinct ground of its own.

The Protestants, as Archbishop Hughes says in his lecture, carried with them on their separation from the Roman Church, "the mysteries of the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, Original Sin," &c. To these ecclesiastical doctrines the reformers added some others, and embodied the whole in creeds or symbols of belief. They set up these creeds as authoritative in place of the Church, and pronounced ban on all who disputed the creeds. Herein Protestantism tripped itself up in its course, and its gait became awkward and embarrassing. It gave the world certain weapons of defence and attack as against the Pope, and then fled behind

papal ramparts when it found that these weapons were sharp and powerful against some of its own positions. It accepted certain doctrines of ecclesiastical tradition, yet set aside the authority of Church tradition on which such doctrines rested. And when the attempt was made to test these by Protestant methods, by appeal to reason and holy scripture, the attempt was met by Protestant persecution, by banishment and death. Calvin and Servetus were men of the same years, the one a Frenchman, the other a Spaniard. Both were learned men, trained at universities, and devoted to the Protestant Reformation. Both found their way to Geneva, one of the intellectual centres of the new movement. This city came under the sway of Calvin. Servetus, however, in reading holy scripture saw that the doctrine of the trinity was not there, and publicly said so. For thus using his Protestant right he was condemned by Protestant authority, and burned at the stake.

The result of such a course was the erection of a trinitarian dogmatic system into an authority which dominated over reason, conscience and holy scripture. Herein Protestantism was disowned in effect by those who took its name. This dogmatic system failed to command respect from the reason of mankind. Through dread of its scrutiny it persistently disparaged reason as a guide not to be trusted, while every thinking man felt that if the God-given reason could not be trusted, nothing could be trusted; since it was only through this faculty that they could apprehend anything. Eternal salvation was made to depend primarily on

belief in certain propositions. Each individual believer was set upon saving his own soul by this rigid kind of faith, instead of devoting himself to works of loving service towards others. Apart from this propositional belief there could be no assurance, no hope of spiritual safety. Hence came distrust of religion, and indifference thereto among great masses of people of every grade of society in Protestant lands. The beneficent ministry of Christianity in its grand purpose as a practical religion was checked and curtailed. Hence the failure of Protestantism, so far as it has failed.

But is Protestantism wholly a failure? No, brethren, no. Protestantism is a success. It might for a while deny, but could never quite discard the parent of whom it was begotten—the divinely given reason. Blood will eventually tell. And Protestantism in its development must needs proclaim its kin to reason, assert the rights of reason, and feel that the cause of reason is its own cause. The emancipated intellect of Protestant lands, freed from the yoke of Rome, struck out into various paths of research, industry, enterprise and general education. A priestly yoke crushes self-reliance out of a people, and holds them back from wholesome enterprise—such enterprise as stimulates the faculties and energies of man to go forth to his divinely appointed work of subduing the earth. Hence the sluggishness and backwardness of lands where priestly rule predominates. And hence the more advanced position of those countries, wherein such rule is subordinated to the general interests. This is a kind of

success which is practically recognised by the emigrants from all European lands, whether Catholic or Protestant. Not to Mexico, nor even to Brazil, does the tide of emigration flow. But to those more northern parts of this continent, where a Protestant order of civilization prevails, and holds out its better promise to the coming settler.

The Rev. Dr. Ewer, standing in a Protestant Episcopal pulpit in New York, says that Rome is an evil. To be sure, he says in the next breath that Protestantism is a far greater evil. But the fact stands, that he pronounces Rome an evil, and yet walks at large in New York. Herein, I see evidence of the success of Protestantism. If it were not for this he would find himself in the Tombs prison. Yes, if it had not been for the Protest at Spires, and the subsequent struggles of Protestants in keeping papal assumptions in check, there could have been no such freedom of speech as Dr. Ewer takes. If he should go to the chief city of priestly rule, and speak such words, he would find himself in a prison within twenty-four hours. In all such liberty of speech, therefore, wherever it appears, I see an evidence of the success of Protestantism.

The failure of Protestantism has come through its mistake of its own mission and proper purpose. And the measure of its success will be in proportion to its rectification of this mistake. It formed no part of the proper work of Protestantism to accept and cherish a

heritage of ecclesiastical traditions as cardinal doctrines, and become guardian thereof. It certainly formed no part of its proper work to persecute and prosecute, exclude and denounce Protestants who applied the Protestant tests to such traditions, and set them aside when they would not fairly stand the test. It has taken Protestantism three hundred years to open its eyes to its error in this regard. It is only now, apparently, that it is coming to consciousness of its past mistake, and to see its proper work in the vindication of those rights of reason in connection with religion, out of which it had its birth at first, and through which alone it could assert its right to be. And when it fully comes to this consciousness, and puts forth its power in the strength thereof, it will press on to conquest.

You will observe that I have treated Protestantism as an incident in the historical development of Christianity, an incident made inevitable by the previous incident of sacerdotalism. And the one must last so long as the other lasts. The Protest must stand so long as its cause stands. The time will come when Sacerdotalism and Protestantism shall cease, and the Christianity that is in both shall rise without the encumbrance, and beyond the limitations, of their special thought and form. This emancipation will be the crowning success of Protestantism. Here we see a glimpse of the Church of the future, the great Church of Christ. Here we see the promise of the return of emancipated Christendom to the feet of Jesus himself

as teacher and leader, light and guide for man. On him, as on a living foundation, shall the universal Church be built, whose every member will be vital with his spirit, in consecrated obedience to his two-fold law of love to God and love to man.

According to the order proposed for these lectures the next topic would be spiritual freedom and diverse operation in the Church; and then come to a close. But in view of the notice taken of Unitarianism by the controversialists who have raised this discussion, I shall proceed in the next place to consider the position of Unitarianism in the present controversy. Let this, then, stand for our subject on next Sunday evening.

And now, may God our heavenly Father sanctify us through his truth; enlightening our minds, day by day, and enlarging our hearts by the light and the charity of the Gospel.

LECTURE IV.

UNITARIANISM.

"Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures."—*Acts* xvii. 2.

"This I confess unto thee (answered Paul), that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers."—*Acts* xxiv. 14.

"THERE is a spirit in man," saith Elihu, "and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding." As a man, I would accept this great gift of God gratefully, and use it faithfully and reverently. In the good news which came to the world through Jesus Christ,—known to all by the dear old Saxon word Gospel,—I see another gift of God which I would accept, also, with joyful gratitude, and devoutly strive to use to its divinely designed purpose. Coming, as both these gifts certainly do come, from God our heavenly Father, with whom there is no variableness nor contradiction, can we suppose that there is any conflict between them, or any real variance in the

way they would lead us? Our reverence for the infinite perfection of God forbids the thought.

Christianity is a revealed religion, made known to the world in and through Jesus Christ. It is rational in its nature, divinely helpful in its tendency, most merciful in its purpose, and supremely blessed in its final effect. The evidence of its reasonableness is to be found in the consistency of its parts, in its consistency with the character of God, and with the moral nature of man; and in its adaptation to the deepest needs of the human race. It is rational in the highest, widest, and deepest sense in which we can use the term reason. And, being a reasonable religion, it encourages a rational method of investigation in things to be investigated. Jesus would have men look at the signs of the times, and to judge of themselves what is right. His great apostle would reason with men out of the scriptures, and have them reason with one another, proving all things, and holding fast that which is good. True rationalism, by which I mean reason in legitimate operation, is wide seeing and far reaching; and, therefore, ready to admit and even rejoice in the supernatural. There is an order of things on the plane of human reason, and another order above that plane. In perfect consistency with reason I may believe in things above the plane of my reason, though I cannot comprehend the mode of their being. On this I can offer no judgment—form no belief. But of things on the plane of my reason I am bound, in consistency therewith, to form a judgment,

as to whether they are conformable with reason, or contradictory to reason. We have three kernels of corn, let us say. One kernel is placed in the ground, another is placed in human hands, and the third remains on the table before us. The kernel placed in the ground disappears, but not until it has become a matrix of life, giving out stalk, blade, and fruit. I observe the result, believe in the reality of vegetable life, although I cannot explain its origin, or the mode of its working. For, after all the explanation which man can offer, life remains a mystery in its origin and propagation. Of the other kernel, placed in human hands, it is positively affirmed that a complete change has been made in its substance, so that it is no longer a kernel of corn at all. It is farther affirmed that this change has taken place in consequence of a process, occult and mysterious, through which it has been put. But I look at it, touch it, and taste it,—thus subjecting it to the direct test of three senses,—and find there is no difference between it and the third kernel still on the table. I am bound therefore to deny the change of substance, inasmuch as the thing lies on the level of my reason. And the direct testimony of my senses convinces me that such a change is contradictory to reason.

I dare not define a miracle as an infraction of nature, if by nature is meant the order of things actually existing in the universe. Man knows not the universe as a whole, but only as much of it as falls within human observation. And in common speech we

give the term nature to this portion of the whole. Hence the term supernatural, in our common speech, applies to that which is above or beyond our observation of nature. My clock strikes every hour. But the same principle of construction, applied to another clock, might be arranged for only one stroke in a year or in a hundred years. Three generations of men, each man living thirty-three years, might be born into the world and die out of it, and yet never hear that clock strike. Yet when it did give its stroke, the sound thereof ought not be denied because three generations had not heard it. This illustration might be extended indefinitely as to time. The clock might be made to strike once in a thousand or ten thousand years, so that its stroke should be heard once only in the long reaches of the centuries. Now the cycles of God are of large range, and his operations on an infinite scale. And it is not fit for the finite reason of man to pronounce against a stroke in the centuries, declaring it impossible, merely because such a thing had not been heard in a given number of known centuries before or after. In the judgment of true reason this would not be rational, but irrational.

True reason recognises the limits of its own observation in the universe of God; and does not utter the word "impossible" in reference to anything, except when it contradicts God's established certainties in mathematics and morals, or the indubitable evidence of those senses given by God, for testing things proper to their own sphere. It distinguishes between the

super-natural and the anti-natural, and therefore does not refuse to acknowledge an order of things, the mode whereof may transcend or lie beyond the boundaries of human knowledge and observation. It is reverent, always ready to bow before the infinite majesty, while it confides in the infinite wisdom and love. It looks to the past, and holds by the past, recognising it as an integral portion of the divine order, which it is bound to respect, and for which it is grateful. It sees God revealing himself in the past, and hears his word in the past, coming through men who spake as they were moved by a greater measure of inspiration than that which moved the ordinary understanding. In the psalms of David, touching the finest chords of the human heart, in the prophetic strains of Isaiah, denouncing human wickedness, calling men to repentance, and looking clear and far into the future for the coming of a time of more glorious promise for the race—in such utterances it hears the heavenly voice. It requires no previous historic evidence to certify the record, before it can acknowledge the voice. The voice certifies itself, as that of the spirit of God speaking to the spirit of man.

Thus it is, I say, that true reason is wide seeing, far reaching, grateful for the past, and reverent in its attitude. It has an open eye and a ready welcome for every manifestation of God; looking for his presence, likewise, in the present time. It sees a manifestation of God in earth, and air, and sky. In the visible heavens, it reads a declaration of the glory of God. In every pang of remorse for sin, in every sigh of peni-

tence, in every holy resolve and in every heavenward aspiration, it recognises the spirit of God, striving with the spirit of man, and pointing to a higher, nobler, holier way of life. And, standing in marked prominence above all other manifestations, it recognises that revelation of God which appeared in the human life of Jesus of Nazareth, eighteen hundred years ago. The previous certification of the record is not needed as evidence in proof of the divinity of that life. That life proves its own divinity by the moral and spiritual impression which it makes, and has made upon the mind of the world. We see it there, a fixed light for the life guidance of the race. It rose upon the horizon of a darkened world, and, struck by its benignant and life-giving rays, the human race commenced a new era, marked by a higher order of life. As we look at the sun we require no farther proof of its existence than its own light and heat. Far more readily might we concede the possibility of the sun's being struck from the physical universe—far more readily might we concede this, I say, than concede that the life of Jesus Christ could be struck from the moral universe. Speaking for myself, I could have no greater certainty as to the actual existence and divine character of that life, even though an angel from heaven had made the record, and passed it directly from his own hands into mine.

Is Protestantism a failure? This is the question still before us. In considering it, I have already brought under review, the Christianity of Jesus Christ, and Sacerdotalism as a growth thereupon, and Protes-

tantism as a protest against Sacerdotalism. The specia notice taken of our Unitarian form of Protestantism, by those who raised this discussion, seems to demand on my part a review of the position of Unitarianism in the present controversy. Hence, the present lecture.

The standing conflict between reason and religious faith, which the traditional creeds involve, has always impressed Unitarians with the necessity of reconciling reason and faith, so that nothing which is clearly against reason and the ascertained facts of science, shall be required to be held as true in theology. Hence, as incidental to their distinctive positions, this has come to be, with them, a prominent purpose. We regard Christianity as a rational religion, with a supernatural element in its history. But, as in all things, it subordinates the outward to the inward ; so it subordinates the miraculous to the moral. The works of Jesus were great, but his word was greater. I have already said that the Protestant Reformation was in the first instance to be regarded as a movement of thought, rather than a conclusion of any kind. I know, indeed, that there are certain doctrines which are called the doctrines of the Reformation. But the movement of thought which legitimated any new doctrine, as against the old creeds of the Church, would open the way for farther progress in the same direction. The treatment of Servetus shows how Unitarian doctrine was checked in the first movement of the Reformation. And the existence of penal statutes against it, even in England, up to a comparatively recent date, together with the blind prejudices

cherished against it, even to this hour, shows how it has been checked ever since. But the "word of God is not bound," and the doctrine of the Divine Unity rose, and is still rising above all social and political obstacles. Unitarianism is a continuation of the Protestant movement, testing the doctrine of the trinity with the same tests as had been applied to that of transubstantiation. In holy scripture it finds God set forth as our Father, and addressed as such by Jesus. Hence it holds by the cardinal doctrine of one God in one person:—"God the Father." It finds no such phrase as "God the Son" in holy scripture. Hence it rejects the doctrine expressed thereby. It does not find in holy scripture any statement of "three persons in one God." Hence it sets aside the complex doctrine of a trinity, and stands with Moses of old and the Lord Jesus on the simplicity of the Divine Unity.

This is the fundamental doctrine of Unitarian Protestants, that which distinguishes them from Trinitarian Protestants. Among Unitarians, as among Trinitarians, there are diversities of belief and administration. But the doctrine of the Divine Unity, in its simplicity, is their grand heresy. So that standing before the bar of public judgment to-day, confronted by any accusers, papal or protestant, they can say, in the words of Paul who was both apostle and heretic: "After the way which they call heresy so worship we the God of our fathers."

An English bishop declared, many years ago, that the great source of the Unitarian heresy, is their favor-

ite maxim, "that the interpretation of scripture is to be governed by reason, and not by authority." This is saying in another form of words, that the inevitable tendency of Protestant principles is to lead to Unitarianism. Melancthon had some vision of such a thing in the very beginning of the Protestant movement. Writing to Camerarius, concerning Servetus, in 1533, he says: "With respect to the trinity, you know I was always apprehensive that these things would, sooner or later, break out. Good God! what tragedies will this question excite among posterity." Yes, there were tragedies indeed, men and women brought to the stake for affirming that God existed in one person only. But still the affirmation was made, and with constantly augmenting force as education spread, and the printing press stimulated enquiry. And now the issue is raised among Trinitarian Protestants as to whether the Protestant principle can be trusted any longer, seeing it leads to Unitarianism. Dr. Ewer, speaking from a Protestant Episcopal pulpit, abandons Protestantism on this account, and falls back on sacerdotal authority, as before the Reformation. Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism, alike, lead to Unitarianism, he says; and so he calls on all men to take refuge in Sacerdotalism. Dr. Hall, a Presbyterian, meets him with a *tu quoque* argument, alleging that prelates and dignitaries of the Church of England have become Unitarians. Both the controversialists are quite right. Unitarianism has appeared in every quarter. Dr. Ewer's rejoinder to Dr. Hall is a curiosity in its way. Such persons, he says, were mere

Protestants within the Church of England. This is a favorite style of answer with Sacerdotalists. When the inefficiency of their system for its proposed ends is clearly demonstrated by facts proving its failure, then they say; "Oh! all this has come to pass merely because men would not follow our guidance." The sum of which, in plain English, is, that if the good God had created men as puppets to be placed and moved by priests, the world would have gone on well. But inasmuch as he has thought fit to create every man with reason, conscience and will of his own, the priestly system is seen to be inefficient and anomalous—based on mere assumption. The verdict of nature and providence is against it.

Dr. Ewer's theory is that the logical result of Protestantism is Unitarianism, and that Unitarianism must, by logical process, pass in the next generation, into negative rationalism, or denial of Christianity. He refers to the late Theodore Parker, in illustrating his theory. Mr. Parker was an anti-supernatural rationalist, but his strength did not lie in this, but in the profound earnestness of his moral nature. On this, however, we have not time to dwell. What I desire now, is an extension of the survey, so that we may see that negative rationalism has come direct from any and every section of the Christian world as well as from Unitarianism, and we might add, in far larger measure. If we look to Germany, France and England, we see Strauss, Renan, and Holyoake. Strauss came from

Lutheranism; Renan studied theology with a view to the priesthood in a Roman Catholic College, and was a resident of the seminary of St. Sulpice at Paris; and Holyoake was a pupil in Angell James' Sunday School at Birmingham. So that it is clear, if men are to pass into negative rationalism, they may do so out of the highest types of papal and protestant orthodoxy, as well as from Unitarianism.

So much for Dr. Ewer's theory of gradation. By way of change let me mention another theory, finding a climax in another direction. The logical result of Sacerdotalism is a pope, a visible vice-gerent of God on earth, and infallible head of the sacerdotal order. A personage thus removed from the ordinary range of humanity, and supported in his pretensions to infallibility, must by logical process assume positions at variance with the common sense and right reason of mankind. If it be affirmed that "liberty of conscience and worship is the personal right of every man, which ought to be proclaimed by law, and asserted in every rightly constituted society," the pope will see that this is at war with his pretensions, and he will pronounce it "insane nonsense." If it be said that "in this our age it is no longer expedient that the [Roman] Catholic religion should be held to be the only religion, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship," he will pronounce this a damnable error. And the actual result justifies the anticipation, as Dr. Ewer would say. For proof, and for the form of words just used, see

the Encyclical and Syllabus issued from the Vatican in 1864.

I have said that Unitarianism is a continuation of the Protestant movement of thought, testing doctrine by reason, conscience and holy scripture. Man cannot disconnect himself from his rational faculty any more than he can get rid of the earth on which he moves. He may decry the common earth beneath his feet. He may even adopt a philosophy which denies its actual existence. But in every turn of work he does, he must depend on the earth as a fulcrum. So a man may decry and deny reason, but he must use it, nevertheless. In matters theological, all must use it whether Sacerdotalists or Protestants,—all must rationalise to a greater or less extent. The late Archbishop Hughes, in his lecture on the decline of Protestantism pleads the use of reason. "If it be said that we, Catholics, because we admit authority, do not exercise our reason, we have an answer which is obvious," he says, "and it is this. If you ask the reason of our submitting to authority, we answer, that, in the *exercise of that faculty* we have arrived at the conclusion that God, having made a revelation, has appointed a Church, &c." Here then we have an avowal by the Archbishop of two conjoint principles of guidance, one rational, the other supernatural—precedence being given to the former, as indeed it must be. The various pleadings of Sacerdotalists, so plentiful in these days, are addressed to the reason, thus recognising its right to pass upon the questions at issue. Why, then, do

they decry reason and asperse it? If it is qualified, in the first instance, and most important crisis, to guide men to sacerdotal authority, why should it be cast out afterward? Is the faculty to be trusted when it guides us to the sacerdotal Church, and not to be trusted when it guides us to Jesus Christ himself? Sacerdotalists and Protestants alike, then, in their prime argument, start from an avowed basis of rationalism. Let us not be frightened by names. The fact is simply as I state it.

Reason being appealed to and used, guides some to Sacerdotalism, and leads others to protest against such authority. In the one case it comes to the camp of an enemy bound to destroy it. In the other to the camp of a friend bound to protect it. Sacerdotalism stifles reason, and destroys its free and natural functions. Acting on the fears of men, it awes the reason into deliberate abdication of its rightful office. Acting, again, on the religious nature of man it urges it into fanaticism, and the blood of seventy thousand innocents flows in Paris and France. And this, in the name of religion. Sometimes, again, by its continued disregard and denial of men's natural rights, it goads them into a phrensy of passion which overthrows reason, and produces another slaughter in the same city of Paris. And this, in the name of reason. But it is clear, there was no religion in the massacre of Bartholomew's day, no reason in the terror of the French Revolution.

Is Protestantism a failure? We say No. It is not a failure, any more than Christianity itself is a failure.

The growth of Sacerdotalism checked the proper development of Christianity. Much has been said about the condition of the masses of the people in Protestant lands. I know, indeed, that these have not been attended to as they ought. But this I will affirm, and I do not say it in any justification of Protestant neglect—I affirm that the masses of the population in Protestant countries are in as good a condition as men, as citizens, and as Christians, as the masses of the people in any sacerdotal countries whatever, whether connected with Roman pontiff or Greek patriarch. When you look to the populations of Russia, Spain, Italy, Mexico; and then look to the populations of England, Prussia, Scotland, and New England; you will say that I might have made my statement far stronger. Of course, I might. But it is strong enough as it stands, if it only leads to a farther consideration of the comparison.

Is Protestantism a failure? No. It cannot fail as long as the rational faculty lives in man. The stars in their courses fight on its side, and against the usurper. Day by day the testimony is multiplied that Unitarianism is the logical result of the Protestant principle. Why should we not accept the result? God and Christ remain to us, although the scholastic doctrine of the trinity be set aside. Yes, they remain; and, when disencumbered of scholastic terms, shine all the more brightly and benignly to the apprehension and heart of mankind. The Christ of the New Testament will not lead his people astray.

Here let me give a very condensed statement of Unitarian faith:—I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his Son, our Lord, who taught and wrought in Judea and Galilee, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, and the third day rose again from the dead. I believe in the holy Spirit, the holy Church universal, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body spiritual, and the life everlasting.

For myself, I might add more to this statement, but I could scarcely diminish it. Yet, simple as it is, I should not dare to present it as a test of Christian fellowship, nor venture to exclude men from the Church of Christ because they could not receive it. The proper evidence of a man's Christianity is the Christ-like mind and life. My respect for the nature of man, as God has made it, forbids any such exclusion. In the Church universal there are, and have been from the beginning, diversities of administrations and operations. And, as I say so, I am reminded that this stands as next topic in the order of our discourse. The Church of the coming time will rejoice in spiritual freedom, and welcome the diversities inseparable therefrom. The consideration of this subject, on next Sunday evening, will bring this course of Lectures to a close.

And let us pray our heavenly Father that he will establish us in his truth, by the power of his word, through the guidance of his spirit.

LECTURE V.

THE FREE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. . . . . For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."—1 *Cor.* xii, 4, 5, 6, 12.

In closing my last lecture I presented a brief and simple statement of Christian faith as held by a Unitarian. But brief as it was, I said, I dare not present it to another mind as a test of Christian fellowship. The Christ-like mind and life is the proper test. In saying this I do but follow Jesus. Love God and man, he said; act this out and thou shalt live. By this, said he, shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another. Here we have the basis and the bond of the true and living Church of Christ—the basis on which all members should stand, the bond which would hold all together in one body.

A central basis and a uniting bond are clearly needed, in view of the diversities of operations and administrations inseparable from the varieties of human thought and endowment. These varieties are of God's bestowal and disposal, and are to be accepted and dealt with as part of his divine order. In all such diversities it is the same God who works, by agencies more or less direct. The divine life of the Gospel, as it flowed into human souls, did not raise or reduce them all to one uniform type, but left some to put forth their energies and endowments in one direction, and others in other directions. The Gospel of Christ did not come to destroy individuality, but to strengthen and develop its best forms, and lead them all to co-operate for the common good. In his letter to the Romans, also, the apostle Paul recognised diversities in their way of regarding Christianity, among the first Christians. Where such differences existed, his counsel was that each soul should abide by its own conviction as sacred, and forbear passing judgment upon others. "Let every man," he says, "be fully persuaded in his own mind." "To his own master he standeth or falleth."

Christendom is much divided at the present time by differences, which are the inheritance of many centuries. In attempting to heal division, fresh questions are raised, which only perpetuate it. Where is the remedy to be found? Not certainly in the persistent demand of every or any sect or party that its particular way is to be followed to the exclusion of all others.

The question still before us is Protestantism, considered as a failure or a success. The obvious point to start from, in a discussion like the present, is the Christianity of Christ himself. This course we have taken. And we have shown that Sacerdotalism is a growth upon and around Christianity, pure and simple, as it came from the lips, and shone in the life of Jesus. The existence of Sacerdotalism, denying the rights of reason, rendered a protest inevitable. Hence came Protestantism, which, in its origin, was a movement of thought towards a return to simple Christianity. Unitarianism is a continuation of the Protestant movement of thought. Is Christendom always to be divided, as it is now, by sects and parties, which assume the right to exclude each other from the Christian pale and the Christian hopes, because they follow not them? Certainly not. The wisdom and love of a wise and loving God are not to be defeated by the passion, pride, and folly of man. The Protestant movement of thought is an instrument of divine Providence to prepare the way for a true unity in Christendom,—a unity based on the moral and affectional nature of man, refined, elevated, and sanctified, by spiritual contact and sympathy with the divine word incarnated in the person, expressed in the teaching, and made known to the world in and through the life of Jesus Christ.

This true unity will not forbid diversity. Planting itself on the central principle announced and exemplified by Jesus,—love to God, and love to man,—it

will leave the intellect free to deal with all matters related to its own sphere. The true unity of Christendom will be a moral unity, not an intellectual unity,—a unity in religion, not a unity in theology. For as intelligence advances, broadening the general mind, the distinction between religion and theology will come to be more and more generally recognised. Theology, as the term indicates, is a science,—the grandest of all sciences, indeed, inasmuch as it relates to God, the greatest of all objects, to his works, his ways, and his relation to mankind. Theology is a science, as clearly as Geology is; and, as such, it belongs to the domain of the intellect. Religion, as the term indicates, is the binding anew of a weakened or broken tie, as between man and God. It is a feeling of the heart, a conviction of the moral nature, rather than any conclusion of the intellect whatever. There is, of course, a close and important relation between theology and religion. If a man's theology leads him to believe in three Gods, or in thirty, he will, in his religion, worship the three Gods, or the thirty. If a man's theology leads him to believe that his God created him corrupt at core, and under curse, he will, in his religion, render the worship of fear—the abject worship of a slave. If, on the other hand, a man's theology leads him to believe in one God only, he will, in his religion, concentrate his worship on this one God. If a man's theology leads him to believe that his God created him in innocence, and smiled upon his birth, he will, in his religion, render the worship of

love. Thus it is that there is a close and important relation between theology and religion. In Christianity, as presented in and through Jesus Christ, the fundamental theology and the true religion will be found mutually harmonious, strictly consistent one with the other. One God is presented, whose name is Father, and whose essence is love. All men are brothers. Hence, in love to God and love to man, we find the true religion,—the one thing needful,—a thing, however, so large and comprehensive that it includes all the thoughts and activities of our human life.

Christianity is a principle of divine life graciously communicated by God to the world through Jesus Christ our Lord. It was *for* men, and it came *to* men in all their diversities of temperament, culture and condition. Men were transgressors of the law of God, and had thereby become alienated from their heavenly Father; and it came to subdue them to penitence, win them to obedience, and lift them to a higher order of life. It came to raise them, and save them, by turning them from their iniquities; and thus redeem them to God. To Jew and Gentile, with their various thoughts and habits it came; and to whomsoever it came this was its purpose. The Jew had his peculiarities of thought and custom, and the Gentile had his. But the reception of Jesus as the Christ, and the acceptance of his religion, did not necessarily involve the rejection of these peculiarities, except when they stood in the way of purity of heart, and holiness of life. The believing Jew might still observe his rite and his feast

day, the believing Gentile might neglect all such observances, and yet both might be equally good Christians. Thus it was that the free, generous, enlarged and loving spirit of Christ, fell into diverse channels of thought and custom; and by following out these channels in their own course, to purify and cleanse them, it obtained a diversity of development.

Nothing appears more prominently in the initial chapters of Christian history, than this diversity of development. In the New Testament writings it is very evident. John and Paul and James had the same religion, but we have only to examine their writings to see how differently it is developed in these different individuals. The doctrine of Jesus, falling into the mystically disposed and loving soul of John, blossomed out into that divine Gospel of his, so high, so deep, so spiritual. The same doctrine received into the earnest and enthusiastic heart of Saul of Tarsus, came out in those strong and glowing letters of Paul the apostle, so full of life and argument. And the same doctrine, again, accepted and cherished by the sober, practical mind of James, yields fruit in that epistle of his, so plain and so practical. Among the less prominent disciples of the first age we find evidences of a like kind. It is plain from the book of Acts, and from some of the apostolical epistles that Christianity took differing shapes of thought and expression, as it fell into Hebrew, or Gentile channels. The same fact appears with growing distinctness in the accounts which we have of the state of the Church in the ages following that of the

apostles. The pride and passion which were kept in check by apostolic influence waxed stronger when the apostles were no longer on earth; and heated controversies soon proclaimed aloud the existing diversities. Herein lay the seed of the wrong and the damage—in the passionate heat of the controversies. That simple difference of opinion, or intellectual judgment, should have existed, carried no wrong in itself. It was natural,—consistent with the necessities of human nature; and, in its legitimate operation, would only lead to diversity of development of the same great fundamental principles which lay at the basis of the Gospel. These divine principles were so comprehensive in themselves that they required a diversity of development for their complete manifestation. The wrong came to the religion and to the world from the human passion which mixed with these differences; and which, by its selfish heat, set men angrily against each other, and almost stifled the loving principle of the religion which was to unite them.

The present age is the heir of all past ages, and the immediate out-growth of more than three centuries of the combined action of Protestantism and the printing press. Rome, and this term may be taken here to include Sacerdotalism in general, has pronounced Protestantism a failure; and has averred that she must again gather the world under her wings, else it will become a moral chaos. But intelligent Protestants know better than this. The finger of divine Providence, as indicated in human progress, takes no such backward

course on the dial. It is not to be denied that freedom of thought has brought out some sad developments. Every such movement must be taken with its drawbacks. The first movement of Christianity had its drawbacks in the pride, passion, and wilfulness of some who acted in its name. The same thing may be said of the first movement of the reformation. And if there be similar drawbacks in our own times, made manifest in the rashness and extravagance of free thought in connection with religion, we must just accept them, and in good faith abide the issue. In the hurry of the present age, men do not always pause to discriminate, but pass with the sweep of the current to sweeping conclusions. In such case the confident assertion of extreme positions on either side has great weight with the multitude who do not think much for themselves. The weak, the crude, the impulsive will be readily carried to either extreme, as tastes and tendencies prompt and lead them. Yet there must be reflection and discrimination in any serious and earnest seeking for truth. Extremes produce extremes. And if we have negative rationalism, renouncing Christianity either openly or tacitly, we must bear in mind that the presentation of Christianity made by ecclesiastical orthodoxy has been such as to provoke reason and urge it to take extreme positions. The modification of one extreme will prepare the way for the modification of the other extreme. Let us liberalise the Christian Church in all its branches, by bringing it back to the reasonable religion of Jesus Christ

himself. And then, occupying ground defensible by reason, we may go forward, in the name of Christ, to Christianise liberalism, by making it truly thoughtful, reverent, and wise. This we may do by appeal to reason, to conscience, to the deepest affections, to the noblest impulses, and to the purest aspirations of human nature. We may show how God, as revealed by Christ, corresponds to all these, he being truth, justice and love, in the infinite perfection thereof. As heavenly Father, bending in mercy over his children, he wins upon our affections. And thus gaining upon our affections, our human growth is into the divine image. Through devout worship of a God of truth, justice and love, the worshipper grows in his devotion to truth justice and love. And with Jesus presented as visible type of man in intimate union with God—as the divine man—all men may be lifted into the way of a like union, and made to see how through love and fidelity, their humanity may grow in the divine likeness.

With the Christian Church made liberal and liberalism made Christian, with the twin gifts of God, reason and religion, harmonised in their relations, the moral power and spiritual influence of Christianity will be brought to bear upon the mind and heart of mankind in larger measure than ever before. I have faith in God, and I have faith in man, likewise, as the offspring of God. I have faith in the parable of the prodigal son, and believe that the child will come back to the father, if the father's character be fairly presented to him. And I ask the sects, papal and protestant, small

and great to keep their ecclesiastical and dogmatic peculiarities out of the way, so that the father's face may be seen in all its benignity. I ask them to cease excluding each other in the name of God, and no longer use that name divine in the service of their human pride and passion. In every section of the Church there are true and holy souls who will meet in the father's house of many mansions, where there will be no sectarian barriers. I look at Rome, and I see a great exclusive organization whose religious system assumes very different aspects to those persons respectively who look at it on the sacerdotal and dogmatic, and who look at it on the spiritual and practical side. The Christian mind revolts from Dominic and Torquemada, but is attracted by Borromeo and Fenelon. Our respect is freely rendered to the faithful priest who goes in and out among his flock ministering to their wants, with a single eye to God. But for priests, or organisations, which, under the name of religion, aim at political domination and become the disturbers of civil society, we can have no respect. Rome meets certain wants and tendencies in man, and hence it exists. It has rendered important service to the race in the past, and will continue to do its part in the Christian work of the world. And when we look at the various Protestant sections of the Church we see there, also, how certain wants are met, and how the different elements and tendencies of human nature come into play, and show themselves in connection with Christianity. In Episcopalianism we see the conservative tendency to fixedness and dignity

of ritual. In Calvinism we see the desire to do homage to the majesty of the divine sovereignty. In Methodism we see the emotional element seeking ampler play. In Unitarianism we see the natural desire for freedom from mental restraint finding a wider range. Amidst all these diversities Christianity works. All these have their place and their purpose in the divine order of the world. Every such various development suits some prevailing characteristic of human nature. Each soul that is sincere in its religion seeks that form of teaching and worship, which best supplies its special want, and helps it towards God, the great end of its being. The spirit and principle of the Gospel, when thus sought with a single mind, will do its divine work through all or any of these differing methods and instrumentalities. The same spirit, the same Lord, the same God, worketh in all.

In all these diversities of ministration and operation we see branches of the same vine, members of the same body. As now constituted, the various sects, or sections of the general body are provisional and instrumental, in character and purpose. A time will come, we may fairly hope, in the future of the divine order, when they shall cease to be. Meantime they serve a divine purpose. When sects exclude each other, and pronounce each other unfit for the divine favor, it is the weakness, the pride, and bad passions of men that are at work. When sects act so wildly and wickedly they exclude themselves from the divine favor rather than others. Though all sects were to pronounce you,

or me, or any single individual, a heretic unfit for God's presence, and sure to be damned because we do not accept their creed or their ritual, the anathema amounts to nothing whatever. If your mind, my brother, bears the impress of the mind of Christ, if you have Christ's spirit, you are a member of Christ's body, the Church. And it is this great general body of true, and loving, and faithful disciples, each true to his own convictions, faithful to his own light, and moving by a ruling love to serve God and man, in a Christ-like spirit,—it is this general body of such disciples, gathered from every diverse administration of the Gospel throughout all lands and ages, which forms the true Catholic or universal Church, of which the Lord Christ himself is the living spiritual head.

Simple and assured as this idea of the Church universal is to my mind, I cannot but feel how it would revolutionize all prevalent ecclesiastical theories. And yet, keeping the Christianity of Jesus Christ in view, how can it be doubted? Apart from theory let us look at fact. When Elizabeth Fry, the Quaker, in pursuance of her humane mission to the criminal and suffering classes of society, visited the Roman Catholic nuns of Clermont, in France, to see their methods in such work, her Christ-like mind discerned the Christ-like mind in them, and she saluted them as "Sisters in Christ." A few sentences of conversation, and these women found themselves one in the love of God. And then she wrote with rapture of the largeness of the foundation, and of the fulness and real freedom of the

Gospel. I have in my mind, now, another woman, a Unitarian, whose life has been and is devoted to like work. I mean Mary Carpenter; who, after spending thought and toil and means, on behalf of the criminal class in England, establishing Reformatory Schools to reclaim the young, and fit them for an honest service to society, went out to India on a truly Christian mission, though it did not take that name. She went out on behalf of the women of India, to educate them and elevate them; and by so doing gradually to elevate the whole character of native Indian society. And so wisely did she set about this work, that she gained the confidence of all classes interested, and the way is open for her noble errand. Hers is a genuine Christian work, helpful and healing in its influence on the body social of India; and yet its method has been such, that, as with the Lord's own miracle of old, "he that was healed wist not who it was."

Now here are three women, representing three extremes of Church order and Church doctrine, yet animated by the love of God and man, and moved thereby to visit and help the ignorant, the outcast, and the prisoner. Does any one think that before the portals of the Father's house above are opened to these women, they will be questioned as to whether they worshipped with Roman Catholic ritual, or the simpler service of the Unitarians, or in silent meeting with the Friends? Does any one think that they will have to answer as to whether they held by seven sacraments, or two sacraments, or no sacrament? Read Christ's

parable of the last judgment if you want to know his way of regarding such matters.

This idea of the Church universal, founded on Christ's two-fold law of love to God and love to man, is simple as it is sublime. But how can it be carried into effect and obtain an open recognition in Christendom? This is a great question. Our liberal churches have been compelled to stand so long as Protestants of the Protestants, that it is difficult for them to organize with any great effect, for any purpose, at least for the present. Yet there must be organization in Christendom, if Christ's work is to be done in the world. Looking at existing organizations, Rome first meets the eye. But there is no hope that the Roman Church will be the first to divest itself of things extraneous, and take its stand on the simplicity of Christ. I know it is a bold thing for me to say, yet I will say that it seems to me the Church of England might take such a step. I know of no other organized body in Christendom whose position, all things considered, offers so favorable an opportunity for moving effectively in this matter. As a national Church it is not under the exclusive control of theologians or ecclesiastics. Even now, with its authoritative creeds and articles of faith, it contains within its bounds the widest diversities of theological belief. Then, again, although it is a national Church, legally established, it is not, in fact, the Church of the nation. Half the people decline connection with it. Now if the Parliament of England, representing the people of England,

and acting in the interest of the whole nation, were to revise the symbolic basis of the national Church, and so reform that basis, as to make it simply a Service of Christian Worship, with the Bible as text-book, and only authorised outward rule of faith, it would at once become the Church of the entire nation. The anomaly of clergymen signing the same dogmatic articles and repeating the same dogmatic creeds, yet teaching different and conflicting doctrines, would no longer exist. In matters of dogmatic theology, the mind would be left free; while in matters purely religious, the people would be called together to an Act of Worship in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ. With the Bible as text-book, and only authorised outward rule of faith, leaving the interpretation thereof free, the Church would stand, as a Christian institution, on Protestant ground. Such a step would be the proper consummation of the movement of the sixteenth century. With the Bible only, and a free interpretation, there certainly could not be more or wider diversities of belief than those which exist in the Church of England even now. With a service-book, purely and simply religious in its contents, the mind of the worshipper would not be embarrassed in its worship by the obtrusion of unwelcome or distracting dogma.* Under the teaching of earnest and godly

* When he made the foregoing suggestion in a popular lecture, the speaker was aware that he touched a very large and complicated subject. Presented in an incidental way, and under such circumstances, he could not go into details. It will be time

men, untrammelled by authoritative dogma, a spiritual and practical religion might be presented and taught, which would win the affection and confidence of all classes of the people. Here, without snare to the conscience or confusion to the mind, the heart and soul might be moved and helped to a more devoted service of the life, in the way of Christ's two-fold law of love to God and love to man.

In alluding to a change so radical and sweeping, I suppose it will be thought that I indulge in pure chimera. And probably this is so. And yet I have not suggested anything which is not possible, both theoretically and practically. I have simply suggested a grand Act of Comprehension on the part of the Church of England,—an act by which that national Church should step out of its present dogmatic limitations, and, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, meet and welcome and

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enough to go into details when the general principle of a Bible Broad Church comes to be admitted to any considerable extent. By a Bible Broad Church is meant a Church resting on the Bible as the only authorised outward rule of faith. With this as text-book, and a service-book in strict harmony therewith, we should have a Church basis broad enough to include all Christians who are in protest against papal authority—that is, all Protestants. When we speak of an undogmatic service-book, or one purely and simply religious in its contents, we mean, of course, a service-book free from controverted dogmatics. In accepting the Bible we accept the grand religious doctrines of the Bible, and these would be involved and incorporated in the service-book. And in case of doctrine open to theological controversy—such doctrine would be expressed in scriptural terms, or in terms accepted by all as equivalent thereto.

include all the people of England. Probably such an idea is chimerical. I suppose, however, that if any one had said, ten years ago, that the institution of slavery on this Continent would be actually abolished by this time, it would have been thought chimerical also. And I suppose, too, that if any one had said, five years ago, that the Irish Church would be virtually disestablished by this time, it would, likewise, have been thought chimerical. History is rapidly made in these days. In a Free Church of England, further reformed, there would still be theological diversities, ecclesiastical diversities, and diversities in discipline. And so there might continue to be, without offence to charity, which is the chief thing.

Whatever may be the mode of its coming, I believe the Free Church of the future will come,—a Church based on Christ's two-fold law of love to God and love to man,—a Church which will leave the speculative intellect free, while it wins the heart of man to the service of God in the way of this two-fold law. In this Church, the truth, in its farther unfolding, will still be sought. But men will remember that no finite mind can reach or see the whole. And, as they reach their several aspects thereof, they will announce their views, not in pride, nor in any spirit of domination, but with becoming humility and charity. And thus speaking the truth in love, all may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, maketh increase unto the edifying of itself in love.

A DISCOURSE

ON CHRISTIAN MONOTHEISM.

CHRISTIAN MONOTHEISM.

"Jehovah our God is one Jehovah."—*Deut.* vi. 4.

"One Jehovah, and His name One."—*Zech.* xiv. 9.

"Father, ... this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."—*Christ's Prayer—John* xvii. 1, 3.

"To us there is but one God, the Father."—*Apostle Paul*—1 *Cor.* viii. 6.

"God is one."—*Apostle Paul—Gal.* iii. 20.

THE doctrine of the Hebrews concerning God was pure Monotheism. By this they were distinguished. Whatever might have been the doctrine of other nations, the Jehovah of Israel was one Jehovah. So it was in the ancient times, and so it is with the Hebrew people until this day. Of Jewish stock and training, Jesus of Nazareth affirmed the national doctrine concerning God, and made it the basis of his teaching, giving special prominence to God's fatherly character and love. He came to impart new light and to infuse new life into the world for the enlightenment and redemption of humanity. And his declaration was, that this

new life—the life eternal—consisted in knowledge of the Father as "the only true God," and of himself as the Father's messenger of love. His apostles followed in the same strain, teaching the doctrine of one God the Father, whose name is One.

The Hebrew religion, as taught by Moses and the prophets, and the Christian religion, as taught by Jesus and his apostles, are alike founded on Monotheism, pure and simple. The sublime spiritual conceptions, involved in this doctrine and growing out of it, have been the source of man's highest help and hope and aspiration from the days of Abraham until this day. But Jewish and Christian history alike show the hindrances which beset it, through the power of which its brightness has been obscured and its influence impaired, if not destroyed. The records of the Jews show their lapses into idolatry through contact with neighboring nations and their own more sensuous impulses. And the records of Christendom also show how contact with ethnic thought and theology wrought a marked change in the doctrine concerning God. The influence of the Greek thought and philosophic doctrine, as propounded in Alexandria, has left its mark in the Christian Church from the fourth century downwards. The Monotheism of the Church is no longer pure and simple, as in the Hebrew and primitive Christian forms of thought. It becomes trinal. From the most ancient times three has been regarded as a number of mystic significance. The ancient religions of Egypt and India had their particular triads. Herein they stand

in obvious contrast with the pure Monotheism of the Hebrews. Triadism had a prominent place in the Greek school of Alexandria, and from thence it struck its impress on the Monotheism of the Christian Church, so that it is no longer Monotheism pure and simple, but a trinal Monotheism. With this change in the mode of conceiving of God came a change of terms in speaking of God. The old terms, familiar to the Jewish and Christian scriptures, were no longer adequate to set forth the ecclesiastical idea. The one God could no longer be set forth as one, simply. He was to be regarded as three. A scholastic doctrine having superseded the scriptural doctrine, scholastic terms were needed to denote it. Hence such words as triune God, trinity, and the like, now so common in Christendom.

This scholastic doctrine of a divine triad caused bitter and prolonged controversy in the Church. It was withstood in the beginning, and in its earlier growth vigorously and extensively disputed. But the sword of Theodosius settled the question decisively, and nothing was left for the Church but to receive it, whether true or not. Secured a position by the imperial argument of force, it gradually passed into a tradition indisputable. Ecclesiastical history, up to the present time, has been written under the influence of this tradition and in deference thereto. Hence we find the pure Monotheists classed as heretics, when they openly disputed the trinal Monotheism. Had Paul, the apostle, reappeared in the third or fourth century,

directly asserting his doctrine of "One God, the Father," he would have been classed as a heretic, as well as Paul of Samosata.

The Reformation of the sixteenth century brought a shock to the traditions of the Church. Only some of them, however, felt materially the first stroke of the new movement. But this movement, from its nature, was destined in due time to affect all traditional doctrines. Through its assertion of the right of private judgment, in passing upon the contents of the Bible, it opened the way for the restoration of scriptural doctrine. The speculative reason of man had arrogated to make interior survey of the divine nature, and mapped the ineffable Godhead into a triple formula by verbal definitions. The divine triad or trinity constructed in this way, and received as a sacred tradition through many centuries,—the audacity involved in its origin was lost sight of in the dim distance of the past, while the mysterious reverence attached to the tradition itself led the mass of Christendom to see audacity only in attempting to investigate its origin, and expose its unreasonable and unscriptural basis. This was natural enough, and we must not be impatient thereat, nor discouraged thereby.

All the leading tendencies of the present age are in our favor in asserting Monotheism, pure and simple, identical with that of Moses and the Lord Jesus. The strength of the trinal Monotheism lies in the traditional hold which it has on the mind of Christendom. But there are mental and moral forces now at work which

sweep like searching winds through all ecclesiastical traditions and urge a judgment on their merits. The Church doctrine of transubstantiation has the letter of scripture in its favor. "This is my body," said Jesus. The Church doctrine of the trinity has no such express sanction. It is nowhere stated in scripture that "God is three." Rationalism, or reason asserting its right to judge, was too much for sacerdotalism in the matter of transubstantiation, and this dogma was rejected by Protestants. The doctrine of the real presence, involving as it did an overpowering priestly claim, and challenging instant attention by its visible elements and immediate application, was soon set aside. Reason gave the words of scripture a reasonable interpretation, and there was no difficulty about the matter. The doctrine of the trinity was an affair much more remote from the immediate apprehension of men. The mystery of transubstantiation was connected with a visible manipulation by human hands, and an audible articulation by human lips—all carried on in a limited space within ten or a hundred yards of the worshipper. The mystery of the trinity had no such limitations to invite and provoke challenge. It was connected with the infinite and invisible, and the reformers, with few exceptions, were content to adore. Without express statement in scripture, they yet accepted the doctrine, descending as a tradition, rigidly formulated, and guarded by awful anathema. Although the trinal doctrine is not expressly stated in the Bible, yet when the triune creed was formed, and became a fixed tradition,

it was not difficult to extort from scripture on its behalf a receivable support. The reformers did not come to the Bible to inquire whether the doctrine of the divine triad was true or not. Receiving it as an ecclesiastical tradition, they assumed its truth, and sought from holy writ proof to sustain the assumption thus made. The baptismal formula at the close of Matthew's Gospel was held to signify and set forth the doctrine of a triad of coëqual persons in the one God of Moses and Jesus. A main reliance of the doctrine, because approaching more closely to an express statement thereof than any other passage in the Bible, was found in the spurious text of the three heavenly witnesses interpolated in the first epistle of John. And so, indeed, the matter may be said to stand among Protestants generally even until now. So little careful thought is given to the subject and so little discrimination made, that the scriptural doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is quite commonly confounded with the traditional doctrine of a tri-personal God. A scriptural statement, purely Monotheistic, is read by the light of a traditional creed, and unconsciously strained into service and support thereof. Hence the prevalence of trinal Monotheism among Protestants who profess to derive their doctrine from the Bible only.

But the strict Monotheism of the Bible will surely be vindicated in due time throughout Christendom. The Protestant movement, which invites investigation and sanctions protest against ecclesiastical traditions, will insure its ultimate vindication. And we may see

the way thereto opening more widely every year in the ever-widening march of human thought. The Church doctrine of the trinity occupies now a very different position from that which it occupied at the beginning of the present century. Then, and for several years afterwards, there were penal statutes directed against those who impugned this doctrine, even in Protestant England. Yet it was impugned. And such were the grounds taken in impugning it, and such the men who rejected it, that the penal statutes were formally obliterated. It has been found, moreover—and the fact is very worthy of note—that the English Presbyterian congregations, who adopted none of the traditional creeds as authoritative symbols of belief, but held to the Bible as their only creed—it has been found that these congregations gradually passed into pure Monotheism or Unitarianism. Judged by ecclesiastical standards, such pure Monotheism is heresy, of course. And this reliance on the Bible only, interpreted through the exercise of private judgment or reason—this reliance, in short, on the Protestant principle and method has been over and over again pronounced as its cause.

The traditional teaching of the Church in this matter, when brought face to face with holy scripture, finds no sufficient warrant. The alleged warrant is factitious—made up to meet the pressing needs of the case. For the case stands thus: The doctrine of a triad of coëqual persons in the one God of Christendom had its origin outside of the Hebrew and Christian consciousness. It was derived as I have already said,

from ethnic sources. So long as tradition ruled the Church with indisputable sway, the doctrine was accepted, and regarded as a mystery, just as transubstantiation was regarded. But as human thought advances to clearer sight and wider range, the Protestant principle acquires more confidence in itself and applies its method with less hesitation. Hence the present perturbations in all sections of Protestantism, and more prominently in those where education and intelligence more largely prevail. The Anglican reäction towards Romanism is a natural result of lack of faith in Protestant principles. It has already carried many to Rome, and is likely to carry many more. Dr. Pusey employs his learning and eloquence to convince the world that no irreconcilable difference need exist between the Anglican standards and the decrees of the Council of Trent. The Essayists and Reviewers, on the other hand, and such men as Dean Stanley and Bishop Colenso, proceed on the Protestant principle of using reason in religious inquiry, and they announce results which startle and confound traditional Orthodoxy. A like process is going on, to a greater or less extent, in every section of Christendom. Year after year it is becoming more difficult for mere traditional Protestantism to hold its ground. And, feeling its difficulty, it shows its weakness in its readiness to deprecate argument, and rest for support on emotion, or mere traditional convictions, or perhaps on practical work, in order to withdraw attention from its theological defects.

These devices may be sufficient for some time, but

not for all time. Protestantism is not likely to become more afraid of its own fundamental principles, but less so. The Protestant world has entered on a new era, which points to a new, more thorough, and more consistent reformation than that of the sixteenth century. In 1853 the *North British Review* was constrained to utter itself in these terms: "It is not possible simply to adhere to the past as the sum of all truth. We cannot put new wine into old bottles. And, while the world lasts, we shall still have, with every new age, the new wine of intellect and feeling pouring afresh its living stream into all channels of religious and literary activity, and moulding into more harmonious forms the problems of the world's thought. That we are at the commencement of such a new era at the present time can scarcely be doubted. One thing is sure, that we are at the termination of an old and perishing one; that there are, spreading all around us, the symptoms of decay and extinction. God forbid that we should speak in the language of exaggeration, or that we should not feel deeply sorrowful that the old landmarks of our fathers' faith should no longer receive the reverence of their children's children. Yet we cannot shut our eyes to the fact before us." This is a significant and suggestive utterance. And taken in connection with another utterance from an entirely different quarter, we may see the effect of this new and rising tide of thought on the ecclesiastical doctrine of a divine triad. The *Church Review*, published on this side of the Atlantic, writing in 1852, says: "Formal Unitarianism is, doubt-

less, at a stand-still in New England. . . . But error as to the trinity, in unnumbered forms, is on the steady, rapid increase; with not one symptom of an effectual counter movement." That is to say: Unitarianism, in avowed and organized form, is stayed only because of its rapid and unchecked increase within the bounds of the so-called Orthodox and trinitarian churches. The article from which we quote offers a childish plea for Protestant Episcopacy as the only safe retreat from all such heresies. Such plea is substantially papal in its tenor, and seems to be especially absurd now, in view of the actual condition of the English Episcopal Church—a condition, we may add, which is sure to come to the American Episcopal Church when any considerable class of its ministers advance to the position of the leading minds of the English clergy in the combination of advanced learning with conscientious candor and devout courage. The wise remedy of the writer before us is to gather all Protestants into the quiet folds of Episcopacy, and go on repeating the traditional formulas and beliefs. We may surely admire his simplicity, although we may not accept his argument.

Yet, such are the methods very commonly urged. The ostrich, it is said, hides its head when pursued, and thinks itself safe. Herein we say the bird is foolish. But is the traditional Orthodoxy more wise when it resorts to like methods for safety? Heresy spreads, and Orthodoxy is startled. Followed by argument, Orthodoxy thrusts its head into some hiding-place

among ecclesiastical traditions, and cries, "Repeat the doxologies!"—not the scriptural doxologies indeed, for these did not serve its purpose, but the trinal doxologies of tradition.* "Drill these into the mind of the rising generation!" is its cry. So we have seen the matter gravely put. And from another quarter of Orthodoxy we have heard the cry for revivals as a means of restraining the rising tides of heresy. This party relies on active emotion to sustain the tradition by overpowering the judging faculty. But all such methods as these involve a renunciation of the Protestant principle and method of "reasoning from the scriptures." Resort to such methods amounts to admission of indefensibility in open court, on reasonable and scriptural, *i, e.*, on Protestant, principles.

It is recorded of the late Judge Story that, in a conversation with Chief Justice Marshall, he asked him if he believed the doctrine of the trinity. The

* In June 1867, or about six months after the above was spoken, the Cathedral of Christ's Church in this city was consecrated. At that service the grand ascription of the apostle Paul—1 Tim. i. 17—was used. But it was amended by the insertion of the trinal form after the term God, thus: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, be honor and glory forever and ever." As it stands here it is a Trinitarian doxology. Strike out the words of the amendment, indicated by italics, and we have a Unitarian doxology. This amended ascription gives a very good illustration of ecclesiastical, as distinguished from apostolical, Christianity. In such a service-book as we have referred to on page 73, all such ecclesiastical amendments to apostolic doctrine would be omitted.

reply was that he regarded it as "a well-established doctrine of the Church," and he accepted it. "But is the doctrine in the New Testament?" asked his friend; "and will you examine that book and let me know next winter whether you find it there?" The Chief Justice consented, and a year afterwards he said to Judge Story: "I had expected to find the doctrine of the trinity taught in the New Testament, but *it is not there*." Thenceforth Judge Marshall ceased to hold the doctrine. He had been resting before on a mere traditional belief. But, when Judge Story's question roused him to apply the Protestant principle of inquiry he was compelled to surrender it. This may serve as a very good instance of a mind trained to the dispassionate investigation of evidence judging of the doctrinal contents of the sacred records. The case of Rammohun Roy is another in point. Here was a mind naturally of a high order, and admirably trained by discipline and reflection. Renouncing the popular beliefs of his own country and people, he examined the merits of the various religions of the world. Of all others, Christianity commended itself most forcibly to his mind. So distinguished a convert from Hindooism awakened great hopes among the Christian missionaries in India. But these hopes were suddenly checked, when it was found that he was not disposed to follow them into the metaphysical labyrinths of traditional Christianity, His method was that of calm, impartial inquiry, "imploring divine illumination and direction" thereon. The Christian scriptures were his especial

study. With a few other inquiring Brahmins, learned and serious like himself, he carefully examined their contents, but found no revelation there of a triad of coëqual persons in God. This brought him into controversy with the missionaries, who invited him to adopt the doctrine of the trinity. To which he replies: "I tender my humble thanks for the editor's kind suggestion, in inviting me to adopt the doctrine of the holy trinity; but I am sorry I am unable to benefit by his advice. After having relinquished every idea of a plurality of Gods, or of the persons of the Godhead, taught under different systems of modern Hindooism, I cannot conscientiously and consistently embrace one of a similar nature, though greatly refined by the religious reformations of modern times; since whatever arguments can be adduced against a plurality of Gods, strike with equal force against the doctrine of a plurality of persons of the Godhead; and, on the other hand, whatever excuse may be pleaded in favor of a plurality of persons of the Deity, can be offered with equal propriety in defence of Polytheism."

The lack of scriptural warrant causes the ecclesiastical doctrine of trinity to fade away in those communities where authoritative creeds and symbols do not perpetuate the tradition. And the growing demands of reason to have its rights respected, causes the doctrine to fall into disrepute even where such creeds and symbols exist. Our quotation from the *Church Review* shows how this is in New-England. And the *British Quarterly*, an Orthodox review, in an article written about

ten years ago throws light on the condition of things in old England. "As the religion of a sect," it says, "Unitarianism is feeble, . . . but as a complexion of thought tending to affect the opinions of leading men on subjects, it is widely diffused." And from another Orthodox periodical we have the significant statement, viz.: "The chief danger from Unitarians is not from Unitarianism embodied in a sect, but from its secret and gradual spread among those who do not adopt the name." And the *Press*, a conservative and evangelical newspaper, in an able review of Mr. Martineau's essays, says: "The religious body to which we commonly refer when we speak of Unitarians is not probably very influential in England. . . . . But those who are practically and essentially Unitarians constitute a large class. Perhaps, if we take Unitarianism in this extended sense, it is among the most influential creeds of the day. For among Unitarians ought really to be reckoned all those who, without much study of theology, or unable to master the science, or bewildered by the divisions among theologians, have no formal creed, yet retain a strong sense of moral order, a strong belief in God's righteous government. All these are practically Unitarians, and we suspect that even among good men at the present day this class might be found to outnumber the more advanced Christians."

Thus it is that from the organs of Orthodoxy the confession comes of the rapid and growing progress of strict Monotheism. The traditional creeds still remain in the churches as verbal symbols of Orthodoxy,

but intelligent belief therein declines daily. "Among the laity of the male sex now," adds the *Press*, "and (what is still more striking) of the more educated classes, a perfectly Orthodox Christian is rare."

From all this it appears that the time has come for a new classification of Unitarians. In the first place we must distinguish between the *conscious* and the *unconscious* Unitarians. In the former class we place all those who, having an intelligent conception of the difference between the uni-personal and tri-personal theories of God, accept and affirm the doctrine of uni-personality. In the latter class we place those who have no proper conception of such difference, yet habitually conceive of God as existing in one person only. Most of these would, doubtless, reject the Unitarian name. But this does not alter the fact of their being Unitarians. Many of them would probably assent to trinitarian formulas if demanded of them, but neither would this alter the fact of their actual, habitual, and prevailing belief.

Then, again, we must distinguish farther as between *organized* and *unorganized* Unitarians. In the former class here we place those who openly avow their belief by organizing worshipping and other societies on the basis of strict Monotheism, as distinguished from the traditional triad or trinity. In the latter class we place those who do not connect nor identify themselves with such societies, but remain in visible connection with ecclesiastical Orthodoxy.

While it is obvious that organized Unitarians are in

a small minority in Christendom, it is no less obvious that their way of thinking is gaining ground with great rapidity within all the Protestant churches, and especially among the more educated and reflective classes. If the question could be properly put to-day to all the worshippers in Protestant churches,—if it could be put, I mean, calmly, seriously, and without any pressure of prejudice, or priestly or mere ecclesiastical influence,—if it could be put, in short, so that every individual soul would be encouraged to render its own nearest answer,—if the question could be thus put as to whether the tri-personal formula of the creeds is to be held and preferred to the uni-personal formula of the scriptures, what would be the answer? No one can tell, of course, for it is not possible in the existing state of Christendom that the question could be put in such impartial way. But if it could, I think the tri-personal formula of the churches would be willingly permitted to pass into oblivion.

Under all the circumstances it is no great wonder that the question should be sometimes asked with reference to the organized Unitarians, why they should encounter so much vulgar obloquy by maintaining a distinct organization, when, in every community now, there are so-called Orthodox organizations where they might worship with tolerable satisfaction? But in all such questioning one cardinal point is overlooked, viz., our DUTY to the TRUTH. I know it is sometimes said with reference to those within the Orthodox pale, both clerical and lay, who hold views substantially Uni-

tarian, that they can serve the cause of truth better by remaining within this pale. By leaving it, it is said, they would curtail the range of their influence. By taking the Unitarian name, and joining the Unitarian ranks, they would only provoke the vulgar prejudice to cry them down. Our answer to all this is very simple: "For this cause came I into the world," said Jesus, "that I should bear witness to the truth." Does any one ask, with Pilate, "What is truth?" Our answer is that the truth to which every faithful soul is bound to bear testimony, is that form of truth which stands revealed unto itself. Monotheism, pure and simple, is the central sun of all true theology—the one grand light which irradiates the whole. Now when Monotheism in this form is discerned and held to be true, as distinguished from any and every form of trinal Monotheism, it becomes a clear duty to affirm it and bear open testimony thereto. Since, in permitting this central light to remain obscured and confused by any triadic theory whatsoever, we permit an unspeakable injury to the whole range of religious truth.

We lay great stress on bearing witness to the truth. The substitution of the divine triad of ecclesiastical tradition, for the heavenly Father of holy scripture, has affected the entire circle of theological thought, and worked much confusion. Clear and wholesome views of the person and character of God are absolutely needful to a pure, satisfactory, and edifying religion. And those who bear testimony to such views are public benefactors,—all the more so if their posi-

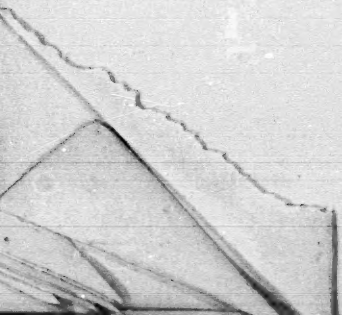
tion thereby is made one of difficulty. We need no sprite to tell us, however, that those who are disposed to bear witness for the truth do not form the mass of the community. Many persons are so constituted and trained that they cannot appreciate any well-marked distinction between right and wrong. Or even if they can, the love of right takes no such strong hold on them as to induce them to cleave thereto, to their personal inconvenience or worldly disadvantage. Others, again, can see no particular difference between truth and error, nor any special value in the one more than in the other. Or, if they discern such difference, they are heedless thereof, and faithless thereto if their personal convenience or worldly advantage invite and tempt them to faithlessness. In the existing condition of general society, organized Unitarians must be content to stand in a minority in bearing testimony to pure and strict Monotheism. But no position can be more noble than theirs. And fidelity to a noble position makes noble men. Dr. Vaughan, formerly of the Lancashire Independent College, in his book on English Non-conformity, says of the Unitarian Non-conformists of England: "There are no men living in whom there is a finer sense of truthfulness and honor than in our English Unitarians. Nor is there any religious body who has to pay so great a price, as the cost of following their religious convictions." This, I believe, is the simple truth, and we must respect the candor of the Orthodox writer who can make the statement. To my mind it is a grander testimony, by

far, than if he could have said, "They possess and control all the Episcopal palaces and ecclesiastical benefices of England."

If men are to be sincere about anything it should surely be in the matter of religion. In the common affairs of life manly men do not favor pretence, nor encourage an outward conformity which belies the inward conviction. For wherein, let me ask, consists the manhood of a man? Is it not in his interior thought, and not in anything merely outward? A man's proper personality lies in the character of his thought; and he is true and self-respecting only so far as he is true to this inward thought, scorning to compromise it through outward conformity, where any cardinal point is involved. In the existing condition of general society, the timid, the time-serving, and the sequacious classes will be found outside the ranks of organized Unitarians. If any such find themselves inside, by the accident of birth or the like, they will either be gradually trained to moral courage, or, failing this, they will fall out of the ranks under one or other pretext. For the winnowing process goes on now as in the first age of Christianity. When it came to be clearly seen that Christ was not going to lead his followers to any worldly advantages, but rather to much worldly trial, "many walked no more with him." And so, likewise, now, as in the days of the Lord Jesus, the question of the timid and sequacious is, not whether the doctrine is true in itself, but whether "the rulers and Pharisees have believed." The

timid, the time-serving, and the sequacious evermore seek to go in the way of the multitude rather than in the way of the truth.

Nevertheless, the truth presses on to conquest. The work of Erasmus for the nineteenth century is passing fast to completion. The age awaits its Luther, whose bold and resolute words will strike the decayed traditions of the current Orthodoxy, and scatter them as chaff before the wind. And the new reformation impending will be a grander one than that of the sixteenth century, going deeper in its process and wider in its range. Its Orthodoxy will be more truly orthodox, its Protestantism more thoroughly Protestant, its Christianity more Christ-like than that which now spreads confusion and alienation throughout Christendom. It will open the way for the coming of the true Church Universal, founded not on human traditions and contradictory creeds, but on the Lord Jesus Christ as chief corner-stone—on his teaching, spirit, and life.



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